







KANGAROO-LAND.









# KANGAROO LAND.

BY THE

REV. ARTHUR POLEHAMPTON.



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The following pages are Dedicated  
BY THE AUTHOR  
TO HIS MOTHER AND SISTER,  
IN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE  
OF THE UNFAILING STREAM OF LETTERS THEY SENT HIM  
DURING HIS SOJOURN IN AUSTRALIA.

"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country."

*Proverbs xiv. 25.*



## AUSTRALIAN GOLD-DIGGER'S SONG.

Australian skies incessant smile,  
Like Beauty's face unclouded ;  
But give to me my native isle,  
Though oft in tempest shrouded.

What care I though no mines of gold  
My native land discloses,  
Since in her rock-bound shore's stronghold  
My heart she fast encloses.

Though birds of gaudy plumage fill  
Australian woods unfading,  
I miss the nightingale's soft trill,  
The young spring serenading.

I miss the primrose' yellow head,  
The youthful year perfuming,  
And spring's warm breath, the icy tread  
Of winter fast consuming.

One hearty grasp of loving hands  
Of friends, at home united,  
Were worth the wealth of all the lands  
That ere the round sun lighted.

Nor time, nor sea, where'er I rove,  
My heart from home shall sever ;  
The tides of my affection move  
Towards my own land for ever.





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## CHAPTER I.

### A VOYAGE.

How vividly each of us can recall even the minor circumstances of any great crisis of our lives, and yet how unreal they often seemed at the time ! I shall not easily forget that breakfast in a front room of a Birkenhead hotel, overlooking the Mersey,—my last meal on English soil, before embarking for Australia, from which country the period of my return was indefinite. I went through the form of having breakfast, just for the look of the thing ; but how tasteless, as in a dream, everything seemed ! In fact, breakfast, in the proper sense of the term, was only an expression, and yet I could now—contradictory as it appears at first sight to say so—sketch the interior of the



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room in my mind pretty accurately, and give the bill of fare, even to the potted shrimps, to say nothing of placing my friends, who had come to see the last of me, in their proper positions at the round table; and doubtless all who have been in similar circumstances have felt, and could do, in like manner.

How wretchedly unnatural was our forced merriment, each knowing that the other was a hypocrite for wearing so cheerful a mask; yet any disinterested spectator might well have supposed that we were taking the matter very much as a thing of course, especially when my mother ran to the window every now and then to make *quite sure* that the ship had not sailed without me.

Well too can I remember how my sister at the last moment, under pretence of cutting off enough hair for a locket, was suddenly seized with a desire for enough to make a bracelet, and went on cutting till I was obliged to run from her shears. But partings have always been pretty much the same, I expect, since the world began, so I will say no more about it.

I must however allude to the general parting on board, when word was passed for all shore-goers

to leave the ship. The officer who gave the order must have been pretty well used to such scenes, to judge by his supremely indifferent manner and firm quick voice; and, speaking in a general way, what a blessing it is, that one's feelings *do* get crusted over in time by familiarity with others' griefs and sorrows,—I mean, so that mere sensitiveness ceases to be a hindrance in helping them, and a useless pain and hindrance to oneself.

On the whole the general farewell on board was very much the same as our private parting at the hotel. There was the same effort in most cases to mask the feelings, as bravely as might be, though here and there they could be pent up no longer. But even this really sad though interesting scene, like many others, had its ridiculous side, particularly when a huge basket of creature comforts for the voyage fell from the kind hands that brought it, and oranges, lemons, and Brussels sprouts rolled about the deck.

At length the last lingerer had been hurried into the steam-tender, that seemed to be snorting with unfeeling impatience at the delay; and as it puffed off, the parting cheer rose, and was soon

answered from the ship. Both cheers were loud and hearty ; but how different the feelings on either side must have been : on the one hand little else than a dull, passive sorrow at parting, and anxious hope for the safety of the voyagers ; on the other, the regret, though equally great, was probably more hopeful, each adventurer experiencing a secret comfort in the knowledge that the chance of meeting again in this world depended more or less on himself ; and who in such a position is not full of determination, and of new hope for the future ? The very isolation he feels gives him a self-contained courage.

The first time that I fully realized the stern fact that I was cut off from home was on the day after sailing, Sunday, shortly before the Church Service was read on deck by the captain. I had previously, since leaving the Mersey, been so fully employed in making things snug in my cabin, that I had had little leisure for thinking of anything else, but now there was a pause, and a sense of something like utter isolation possessed me, such as I have never experienced before or since.

Most of the passengers were on deck, but there

was very little talking going on. I dare say most of them felt as I did. The gaiety and laughter of the few, who had no particular regrets, or were deficient in feeling, were extremely grating, and contrasted strangely with the generally subdued and thoughtful demeanour of the rest.

Nowhere, in my opinion, does the performance of the English Church Service strike the hearer with more beautiful and solemn effects than at sea, especially when, as in our case, it inaugurates, as it were, an important turning-point in life. The day was sunshiny and warm, and the wind fair. The coast of Old England was still visible as a blue line on the horizon, and the playful rippling of the waves against the ship's sides sounded to me like a voice of good omen, and an appropriate accompaniment to the Service. The eyes of many were directed towards the rapidly sinking coast, and the thoughts of all that were worth anything, I doubt not, crossed the blue sea, and the hills and dales of England, to where in many a place of worship their friends were offering up real, fervent prayers for their welfare.

Shortly after the Church Service was over, the wind freshened; sailors ran hither and thither,

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upsetting some passengers with the ropes they were hauling about, and disturbing the cogitations of others.

In fact, we were all at once shaken well up together, and stiffness and reserve were very soon banished from amongst us, for it is impossible to maintain a dignified silence, when a sudden lurch sends you helplessly jostling against your neighbour, or a playful puff of wind obliges you to go in chase of your hat. It's a pity the wind does not blow with a like thawing effect upon certain occasions on shore.

I found it difficult at first to feel at all comfortable in my cabin, it was so like being shut up in a box ; but I was soon almost as much at home in it as if I had never lived anywhere else.

A few of the men passengers, a day or two after sailing, evinced a fancy for playing rough practical jokes, which in time became an intolerable nuisance to the quietly disposed.

For myself, I bore several of rather an aggravating nature without seemingly being in the least put out, but at length I gave notice that I would allow them no longer, and would take means to stop them as far as I was concerned.

I had not of course to wait long for an opportunity of putting my threat into practice. A quarrel ensued, in which the better-disposed people sided with me. I was rather roughly handled, as my opponent was a stronger man than myself, but no practical jokes were played upon me again. I only do myself justice in saying that I acted in pure self-defence.

I have observed that on a long voyage, when the passengers are of all classes of society, these rough jokes, often of a most bullying nature, are sure to be played. I don't recommend the policy I pursued. Experience has taught me that the better way to stop them is to return them with interest, a course which answers its purpose, without entailing upon one a character for bad temper.

With regard to amusements we were sometimes rather hard-up. Card-playing was the most general day and night. Chess was in vogue only amongst a select few. In cold weather we were often driven to very boyish games to keep ourselves warm. There was also an attempts at quoits.

In the hot weather most of us were contented to lie about the deck under the awning. Reading

of any kind, and even card-playing, required too much exertion to be so general as usual, the summit of most men's ambition being reached if they could keep themselves in any degree cool. There was of course at this period an unusual run upon the bottled beer, and light wines. I found some lemons my friends had put in my luggage of the greatest use.

Towards evening however we used to wake up a little from our repose, particularly when a shark was to be seen astern, contemplating a mass of pork, with which an enormous hook was baited. Once a shark over twelve feet long was caught, much to the terror of an elderly woman, who fell down the hatchway from fright as the monster was being dragged past her. An unfortunate man also was in a state of more or less alarm, some one having maliciously thrown a coil of the rope round his leg close to the jaws of the shark. I imagine he was in no great danger; at any rate passengers and sailors alike seemed highly amused as he hopped along the whole length of the ship with his unpleasant neighbour. *It was terrible though to see the monster open and shut his cavern of a mouth, and lash the deck*

with his tail. The mate presently put a stop to his contortions by chopping that appendage off. I have heard of a ship's deck being broken in by blows from the tail of a very large shark. The shark's tenacity of life is well known. For some moments after the fish had been cut up the several pieces of flesh quivered as if the life had still been in them, and the action of the heart was discernible for some time after.

Everybody in the ship who chose had shark for supper that night. Some really liked it, but I merely tasted it, and thought it rank and coarse, though I can imagine a very young shark being good fare. At night we also used to muster up enough energy for a little music on deck, to which the general stillness in the tropics, the breeze being hardly sufficient to swell out the sails, was especially favourable. I never, I think, enjoyed music (indifferent as it was) more than under these circumstances,—the smooth phosphorescent sea, the stars which seem so much larger and brighter than in northern skies, one or two casting quite a broad silvery track on the water, the pyramid of snow-white sails towering into the night, the quiet rippling of the water along the bows,—



altogether made up a scene in perfect harmony with "sweet sounds," very different to crowded music-halls and gas-lights. I should like to hear Mr. Costa's company under like circumstances, or even a good band.

The sunrises, and especially the sunsets, in the tropics, were often indescribably beautiful, and it seemed strange that under that smooth sea glowing with all the exquisite colours reflected from the clouds such terrible monsters should exist. But for this knowledge it would have been impossible to resist the inclination for a swim.

It is well known that a ship in these latitudes is seldom without a shark following in its wake,—more particularly, it is said, when a death is about to happen on board, of which the creature seems to have an instinctive foreknowledge.

The shoals of flying-fish were pleasant to look at in hot weather, rising and falling again like snow-flakes upon the water, as also were the albatrosses, and other well-known aquatic birds, soaring along, often without a quiver of their long powerful wings,—the very repose of motion, by way of being paradoxical.

Those who have been much at sea must fre-

quently, like myself, have experienced, during a hot dusty day on shore, the pleasure of dwelling in thought upon the cool, deep blue of mid-ocean contrasted with the white foam that bubbles up like new milk along the vessel's sides, and seethes in her wake; and not less pleasant is it to recall to mind the tropical nights when bright phosphorescent points of fire were momentarily, in unexpected spots, shooting up and disappearing like stars on the foam, or when some shark, or other huge fish, gleamed like a lambent flame in the ship's wake.

All these memories to me are "things of beauty that are joys for ever." And not least among them is that living flower of ocean, the little Portuguese Man-of-war, with its exquisite purple and pink hues, which floats by in sunny weather when the water is quite calm.

Certainly not *least* beautiful of its kind is the whale, so awful in its bulk, making a very maelström as it dives below.

But I shall be tedious if I dwell longer upon things that have so often been seen or read about; still, the recollection of them gives me so much pleasure that I cannot write about the voyage

without touching upon them. To me they never can become commonplace, however often I see or read about them, though indeed they are sights, like beautiful scenery, to be enjoyed silently rather than talked of. There is also in them, as in all beautiful objects, more than appears on the surface. They all have a silent language for every heart that is in some degree tuned aright,—a language that a man may understand for himself, though he cannot translate it for the benefit of another.

How grating it is, amid beautiful scenes, that induce thoughts and feelings in harmony with them, to be chained in company with one who does not happen at the time to be in like mood with oneself, or of whom it may be said,—

“ In vain through every changing year  
Does Nature lead him as before ;  
A primrose by the river's brim  
A *yellow* primrose is to him,  
And it is *nothing* more !”

The manner, in which passengers identify themselves in a way with the ship they happen to be in, is noticeable. We passed several ships going the same route in a most exulting state

of mind, as if our honour were concerned; and were proportionately depressed in spirits when a small vessel, which kept in company with us near the Line for a day or two, at last went ahead. One of the mates consoled us by giving it out as his firm opinion that we should have beaten her hollow in a stiff breeze.

Neptune did not come on board as usual on crossing the Line. There were a few buckets of water thrown about by way of mischief, and I got one over me which was intended for another person. It was rather pleasant than otherwise.

As the voyage wore on, symptoms of quarrelling began to show themselves. At first this spirit was evinced in grumbling about the quality of the provisions. The preserved meats and chicken which were served out in air-tight tins were voted short in weight, which they really were to a trifling extent, and I was prevailed upon to head a deputation to the captain on the subject. He was on deck, but I expect had been forewarned of what was about to take place, for I found it impossible for some time to catch his eye, or make him attend to my complaint, he seemed so extremely busy just at that particular

moment; but we hung on to him till he had no excuse for inattention, and on hearing what we had to say he said he would 'speak to the purser about it, which I don't believe he ever did; so we were check-mated in our attempt to get up "a sensation" about the provisions, and the passengers did their best to make up for their disappointment by quarrelling among themselves, and I fancy succeeded very well.

When we got far south of the Cape of Good Hope, among the fogs of the "Ancient Mariner," the days becoming short, we sometimes had a hard matter to get through the long evenings, especially as our cabin was insufficiently lighted. Those few who had taken the precaution to bring covered lamps before sailing managed well enough in their own state-rooms, and the unwise ones, who had not brought lamps, followed their example as well as they could by improvising them in a most ingenious way out of glass tumblers and preserved provision tins, so that there was quite an illumination below every night. This practice was very dangerous, for many of these lamps were not properly guarded, and one night the ship was actually on fire. The fire was

speedily put out, but the captain wisely stopped the burning of all but *bond fide* covered lamps. At this time I never retired to my berth without being prepared to have my rest disturbed by the intelligence of the ship being in flames.

We only sighted land once during the whole voyage of some three months, and that was when we were becalmed for a few hours off one of the Cape Verde Islands, St. Antonio. All below were disturbed very early one morning by news that we were close to land. Everybody was on deck in a few moments, congratulating everybody else on the prospect of landing, and getting a supply of tropical fruits.

The island was less than a quarter of a mile distant, and very beautiful its outline appeared through the morning haze that enveloped it. Indeed, both it and the sea, as still and clear as glass, with a delicate rosy tinge towards the east, looked beautiful as a dream of the Hesperides.

But our hopes of getting ashore, and revelling in a tropical abundance of fruit, were soon dispelled, for we had not been becalmed more than two or three hours, when the water near the island lost its glassy smoothness and became agi-

tated with little waves, just like an inland lake when a sudden breeze crisps its surface., The effect of this land-breeze on the water could be seen from the ship, some little time before we felt its influence.

The contrast between the roughening water, and the yet perfectly unruffled surface between the ship and it, was strikingly beautiful, the boundary between the two being well defined, up to the moment when the huge ship—till then so helplessly immoveable—inclined gracefully to the breeze, as if instinct with sudden life, like a sea-bird with wings ready spread.

A long track of seething foam soon intervened between us and the island, which formed a very picturesque background for some time, the rapidity with which it sank below the horizon telling us sufficiently near the mark, without casting the log, the pace we were going. It is seldom, I expect, unless in the tropics, that one has an opportunity of seeing, in nature, so quick a transition from the most perfect calm to exhilarating life and motion.

The passage throughout was a fine one, though now and then we had weather rough enough to

give a few very timid, or sentimentally inclined newly-married people, and lovers, a convenient opportunity, seldom neglected, for demonstrations of affection—slightly too public, perhaps, sometimes—on the strength of the bare idea of going to the bottom blissfully in each other's arms.

When we got into the cold southern latitudes, the passengers became generally inclined to quarrel. The voyage was becoming wearisome, and the great difficulty now was to get enough exercise to keep ourselves warm, as it had been in the tropics to keep cool by remaining in a state of quiescence during the day. It was tedious work walking up and down the deck for hours together; and even leap-frog, and other blood-circulating games, in time, lost their attraction. Some very torpidly-disposed people endeavoured to pass the cold weather in a state of hybernation, reading or dozing in their berths, and seldom or never appeared on deck. Even the few sunshiny days that we had in these latitudes failed to lure them from their retirement, and the report that a whale, iceberg, or any unusual object was in sight, which put everybody else into a state of excitement, fell unheeded on their ears. It was



a pity we fell in with no lotos-eating island to land them upon ! They certainly enjoyed, though, the enviable advantage of being out of the way of all quarrels.

At this juncture some pairs of boxing-gloves unfortunately came to light, and most of the male passengers began to spar,\* at first in good temper, but after there had been three or four downright fights the captain interfered, and the gloves were laid aside, and a pity it was that the quarrelsome spirit that seemed to pervade the ship was not laid aside with them. The scandal that circulated outdid the dullest country town in England ; and as the partitions between the several state-rooms were of the thinnest, there was abundant opportunity for prying into one's neighbour's affairs. I heard that gimlets even were called into requisition in one or two instances,—a practice which till then I had imagined to be confined to low inns on the Continent.

There were two leading factions ; and so great did the mutual aversion of the respective members of either become towards the end of the voyage, that at meal-times they ranged themselves at opposite ends of the cabin table, which

was placed athwart the ship. The fair sex evinced their dislike to each other by petty demonstrations, which I must be ungallant enough, in pure justice, to say, that the men generally did not descend to. Those who happened to be unfortunate enough to sit on the lee-side, came in for overflowings of anger in the shape of soup and tea pouring in such copious streams upon the table as were not to be accounted for by the usual vicissitudes on board ship.

When the ship went on the other tack, and the party that had hitherto acted on the offensive, were in their turn at the depressed end of the table, they were requited in like manner. Indeed, during the last few weeks of the voyage, everything was uncomfortable in the extreme; the very stewards became insolent and neglectful, in anticipation of the gold they expected to get on the diggings, for which of course they intended to desert the ship as soon as ever she reached Melbourne. The breakage, too, that had taken place in the crockery department during the long voyage, did not add to our comfort. I thought myself lucky in getting a dish-cover by way of a soup plate.

The bottled ale and wine, too, was nearly exhausted, so that it required no little adroit management to prevail upon the steward to sell any. One poor old gentleman, a lieutenant, with a wife and large family, really suffered from the deprivation of his wonted stimulants, and I was amused by his telling me that he drank cayenne pepper and water as a substitute. Lucifer matches also became very scarce, and any one who happened to have a box left was in great requisition.

I have forgotten to say that in the cold weather, before the wine, etc., ran short, it was customary to wile away the long evenings by making up small parties in the state-rooms for a quiet rubber, or singing.

To those who have not been much at sea, the idea of half-a-dozen people or so deriving pleasure from meeting in a space about eight feet square, may seem strange; but these little gatherings were, I am sure, enjoyed quite as much as many more ambitious parties on land, with elbow room to spare. Anyhow it was not worse than being in a full omnibus, (if there ever was such a thing,) or crowded second-class railway carriage, with the windows closed.

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Owing, possibly, to our not having been becalmed in the tropics,—a part of the voyage not unfrequently fatal to children,—we only had one death during the voyage.

To a landsman a funeral at sea must always be peculiarly striking. To say nothing of the novelty, the very vastness of an ocean tomb,—the feeling that the mother, sister, or lover, wherever they may be, can always regard the *whole* ocean, under all its varied phases of storm or sunshine, as *one* tomb holding their lost treasure,—gives a grandeur and breadth of expression to the entire scene of a funeral at sea, that certainly, as far as my experience goes, is wanting when any one is laid in his narrow bed on shore.

But to return to my story : the general fretfulness, and tendency to quarrel, in part owing to the petty discomforts and weariness of a lengthened voyage, were, when at their height, suddenly put an end to, by the report that the Promised Land was in sight ; and if there was any more disputing, it was as to whether that long cloud-like line on the horizon was really land or no.

That point was however soon settled beyond a doubt, and any little remains of ill temper

among the passengers, that had been in great part caused by forced inactivity, soon evaporated in the bustle of getting ready to land; and the general goodwill was shown by the alacrity with which nearly everybody signed the usual papers of thanks to one or two of the officers of the ship, for their conduct during the voyage, at the end of which I really believe people liked each other none the worse for all the bickering. Perhaps, indeed, the sparring prevented a general stagnation of society on board, keeping us alive in a scene where there was, as the Latin grammar used to say, "*nihil nisi pontus et aer.*"

## CHAPTER II.

## MELBOURNE.

ON the — of August, A.D. 1852, after about three months' voyage, we sighted Cape Otway, and soon after passed "The Heads," as the entrance to Hobson's Bay is called, where we anxiously awaited the pilot's arrival; for though our voyage was supposed to be ended, we had still a chance of getting wrecked, as the débris of one or two ships on the opposite side of the Bay plainly enough told us. There was but little wind, and we were drifting helplessly with a strong current towards a spot where there were huge rollers, which soon made their presence felt by rocking the ship as I really think had not been the case before during the whole voyage out. The water streamed over the bulwarks near the galley, where it put the fire out; and those passengers who were unprepared for the catas-

trophe, were sent slipping about from one side of the vessel to the other,—some in considerable alarm, others making a joke of the matter,—but those who observed the captain's face could see plainly enough that the danger was imminent; but soon after the pilot boarded us, and so we escaped the peril, though he told us that, had he been a few minutes later, we should have been on a sunken reef of rocks.

The wind was unfavourable for our getting to Melbourne, at the head of the Bay, about forty miles distant, so we kept tacking about all day, approaching the coast on either side, as near as we dared.

We thus had an opportunity of inspecting the threshold of the land that was for a time at least to be our future home; and the result of our inspection was not favourable, for a more uninteresting, low-lying, Dutch-like coast, with its uncouth-looking stunted trees scattered here and there, and low tea-scrub bushes coming close down to the belt of glaring sand, we agreed we had never before seen.

But the appearance of the coast was not the only thing that put us all out; for a number of

Melbourne newspapers, which the pilot brought with him, had been circulating amongst us, each possessor of which was for the time the centre round whom was grouped a crowd of anxious listeners and questioners. "How about lodgings? What's the price of bread, tobacco, etc.?" were among the most frequent inquiries, and when the news circulated that lodgings of any description were scarcely to be got—even at, to most of us, prohibitive rents—and that bread, potatoes, and other necessities of life, such as water, etc., were selling at fancy prices,—the serious apprehension that prevailed among those who had families depending on them, and the general anxiety at the haziness and uncertainty of the immediate prospect before us, was not without reason, though of course most of us had come prepared for a certain amount of adventure, and uncertainty.

The anxiety was soon however lessened to some extent by the generous offer of one of the passengers, an Australian, who had a large store in Melbourne, to accommodate a hundred people in an empty warehouse for a night or two.

A few of the more timid passengers were so thoroughly alarmed at the prospect of "roughing



it" in Melbourne for a time, that they made up their minds to return to England at once, by the first homeward-bound ship.

Some of the young single men had no alternative, even if they had wished to return home, but to land, for they had spent their money in drinking and gambling during the voyage; these, either from recklessness, or from feeling that there was no retreat, put a very bold face on matters, trusting in their *luck*, which often proved bad enough, I expect. It was amongst this class of men that the mock auctions were got up, during the voyage, under the pretext of amusing the passengers, but in fact with a view to acquiring the wherewithal to continue gambling. Several times I saw rings, pencil-cases, and new books,—often, probably, parting presents from near relations and friends,—put up to auction, and sold for what they would fetch.

Towards evening we approached Williamstown, near the mouth of the little river on which Melbourne is situated, some few miles from the Bay. The crowd of shipping, which would not have by any means disgraced Liverpool,—from all parts of the world,—among which we soon took

our place and dropped anchor, was a remarkable sight, when one considered that but a very short time before the waters of Port Phillip were comparatively unknown, even by name, to the thousands who now looked upon them with interest, as the threshold of the land in which their future lot was to be cast for weal or woe.

Several of the passengers, who were impatient to land, had already gone ashore at Williamstown, and thence to Melbourne ; and when they returned the next day for their luggage, we found out from them that the actual state of affairs in Melbourne was not after all so bad as we had been led to suppose ; that though the style of living was rough and expensive, work, and very high payment for it, were to be had, as people were constantly leaving good situations vacant in order to get to the diggings ; but in spite of this, the return of the surgeon, (a perfectly sober man throughout the voyage,) who had been among the first to go on shore, with a green shade over his eye, and minus his purse, was not calculated to reassure us as to the state of colonial society ; but the fact, which afterwards transpired, that he had when on shore taken an over-dose of some-

thing stronger than water, fully accounted for the state in which he returned

The majority, I should think, of the passengers, had left home with the intention of trying their luck at the diggings at once ; but many of them were scared for a time by the tales that circulated as to how people were “ stuck up,” and ill-treated by bush-rangers, especially in “ the Black Forest,” which lay in the direct route from Melbourne to the diggings,—tales partly true, but to a great extent as purely imaginary as those of the terror-haunted forest in “ Undine.” •

The disembarking I viewed at my leisure, as I was bound for Sydney, and did not care to incur the very considerable expense and discomfort of living ashore during the two or three days the ship was to remain in harbour.

Among other little incidents, our purser involuntarily proved, when on the point of quitting the ship, that the general complaints during the voyage, of short weight of provisions, had not been made without good reason. The unusual quantity of his luggage, amongst which were some barrels in which he professed to have packed whatever he had not room for in his

boxes, exciting suspicion, the skipper was induced to have it overhauled, when the provisions of which the passengers had been defrauded were discovered, consisting of sufficient flour, peas, tea, sugar, and other ship's stores, to support himself and party on the diggings for several weeks. He was put into irons at once, and I saw him no more till we reached Sydney.

Many of the passengers had to keep guard over their luggage during the whole night, as they were unable to get it removed. They had no shelter from a pelting rain, except such as they were able to improvise with their boxes, etc. Several, who did not guard their own things, lost them. The police were, of course, at this time quite inadequate to the crisis, in number, if not in efficiency; and I heard that several passengers had been advised as the only resource, if any one meddled with their things, to shoot him at once after a first warning.

Among other stories the following came to my knowledge:—

A passenger, wishing to have his things taken from the wharf, offered a rough-looking fellow in a ragged blouse, who was leaning idly against a

pile of timber, smoking, a large sum to carry it for him ;\*but at first the man did not even deign to seem conscious of his questioner's existence, much less to answer him. At length, on a repetition of the question, after some moments' interval, a great hand was slowly withdrawn from the trousers pocket, disclosing a nest of gold nuggets of various sizes, which the man, without altering his position, or even looking at his questioner, turned over complacently with his pipe-stem, at last vouchsafing the reply, " Perhaps I *may*, when all the gold is gone where they come from."

After which, it is recorded that he relapsed into his former "*dolce far niente*" state.

The chief mate, our captain being on shore, had already detected symptoms of the *diggings mania* amongst the crew, and had armed the other officers and midshipmen with pistols, with directions to keep a sharp watch, and shoot any of the crew who might happen to be discovered in the act of deserting, and refused to return. Of course, such orders could not be carried out very well, and were much ridiculed. Anyhow, they had no effect on the crew, who deserted as fast as they pleased, especially at night, and during the

confusion attending the landing of so many passengers.

At one time, however, something very like a mutiny ensued, in consequence of the efforts of the officers to prevent desertion ; and though fire-arms were not made use of, some uncommonly hard blows were given and received with belaying pins, etc. The boatswain had his face fearfully cut about, and the second mate, in an attempt to prevent the desertion of our black cook, who was a regular giant, got such a shaking, that for the future his discretion in the matter of arresting deserters was far more noticeable than his valour.

Altogether, we lost about fifteen seamen in port by desertion.

It was a common report at this time that the Governor himself was reduced by the flight of his servants to the diggings to the necessity of grooming his own horse. Whether true or not, the mere fact of such a report circulating, was a proof of the state of colonial society.

In the general confusion that prevailed on board while the ship was in port,—cooks and stewards having for the most part fled,—the passengers that remained had their meals irregu-

larly and poorly served up enough. At last, things came to such a pass that we found it necessary to forage for provisions for ourselves; and I joined an expedition of this kind to the steward's pantry, where sundry hams and tongues were vigorously attacked. We had been thus busily employed, absorbed in the work in hand for some minutes, when some of us became aware of the presence of the captain, who it seems had entered unnoticed, and was standing, stricken with mute amazement at our audacity. His silent spell was broken, however, when one of the party, more polite than the rest, intimated that it would add to our happiness if he would join our little picnic with a bottle of wine or two. This cool request was more than the captain could stand. At first he began to fume and rage, and make as though he were about to kick us all out, which had no effect whatever upon us. Then the whole thing suddenly seemed to strike him in a ridiculous light; the angry countenance relaxed, till at last he laughed outright, and, seeing how matters stood, joined us, as requested, with some bottles of wine.

At length the ship was cleared of the Mel-

bourne passengers, and the anchor was weighed once more, at which operation some of the passengers volunteered their assistance, as the ship was very short of the number of hands required to work her properly.

We had a rough and long voyage to Sydney; for, whereas we ought to have got there in about four days under favourable circumstances, it was three weeks before we sighted the entrance to Port Jackson. In Bass's Straits, through which the wind blows as through a funnel, we lost several sails, and after a few days we found ourselves somewhere in the neighbourhood of New Zealand.

For my part I rather enjoyed the rough weather, and had no idea that we had been in any danger till I heard at Sydney that another vessel had reported us at Melbourne as in distress, and that the Sydney newspapers had given us up altogether as lost.

At length one evening we sighted land again, and the captain said we were near the entrance to Port Jackson; but no entrance could be seen, as it is very narrow, and not visible till a ship is exactly opposite to it.



It was not thought prudent to enter the harbour till morning, as it was getting dusk already, and the weather was still stormy; so we lay to that night, and made for port the first thing next morning.

It would have been well for the "Dunbar," had she, a few years later, waited for morn as we did. She was very much in the same circumstances as ourselves: the night was rough, but the captain determined to get into harbour; he thought she was entering all right, when crash she went upon some low rocks: in fact, he had mistaken a small bight a little to the south of the entrance for the entrance itself; and so it happened that ship and cargo and about two hundred passengers were lost. Only one was saved, a sailor. The ship itself was, within an hour or two, literally ground into small splinters, like lucifer matches, on the rocks.

## CHAPTER III.

## SYDNEY AND NEWCASTLE.

THE appearance of the coast of New South Wales, especially bleak and precipitous near Sydney, does not prepare one for the surpassing beauty of the harbour. As we passed the entrance the scene changed from storm and tempest to all the calmness of an inland lake. The ship had no sooner entered than she was surrounded by several boats, custom-house and others, some manned by stalwart-looking New Zealand natives, who rowed right well. Sydney we could not yet see, as it is situated six or seven miles from the entrance, but we were soon going nearly full sail up the harbour, the sides of which—sloping upwards from the water to a considerable height—are dotted up and down with the glistening white country-houses of the Sydney merchants, which peep out in strong and pleasing contrast to the patches

of sandstone cliff, and dark foliage that nestles round them. At length the city gradually came into view as we rounded a point of land, and very beautiful it looked—much larger than it actually is; with the shipping—quite a forest of masts—in front, and the well-shaded, cool-looking public park, or Domain, and the Botanical Gardens sloping down to the water's edge. At a little distance it appeared more like the capital of a great empire—as likely enough it will be some day—than of a mere colony.

The first thing that struck me on landing, was the thoroughly English appearance of the city and everything about it. There were a few handsome public buildings, such as the Government-house, Exchange, etc.; but the chief impression it gave me was one of quiet, steady prosperity, so different to the uncomfortable money-grasping bustle of Melbourne, where, for some time after the Victoria gold discoveries, few people seemed to think it worth their while, or indeed to have time, to be civil.

I soon secured very comfortable and reasonable lodgings, *for the times*, opposite the Domain. There were two or three lodgers—men—already

in the house, with whom I shared a good-sized, well-furnished sitting-room, where we also had our meals together; our landlady, a very respectable woman, and most excellent caterer, presiding at the head of the table.

As I sat at the open window, in the cool of the evening, overlooking the Domain, I was puzzled as to the origin of a deafening sound,—like the noise of an army of watchmen working their rattles vigorously. On inquiry I found that it proceeded from the crickets in the Park, which are certainly gifted with more powerful and less pleasing organs of sound than the hearth crickets of England, immortalized by Dickens.

As the cool weather was coming on I was not troubled at night by mosquitos,\* whose presence in the summer was suggested to me by the gauze curtains over my bed.

After a comparatively sleepless night, caused, I expect, by the absence of the rocking motion of the ship, I rose early and walked into the Domain. There was a champagne-like briskness in the morning air which was very noticeable, exceeding anything of the kind in England; owing, I suppose, to the generally humid atmo-

sphere of the latter, while the characteristic of the atmosphere in Australia is dryness,—though at this early period of the day the grass was covered and the leaves glittering with the dew that falls so plentifully at night in dry, hot climates. I should think any new comer to Australia, who had been a late riser at home, would change his habits in this respect for the express pleasure of breathing such delicious morning air.

As I strolled along the edge of the Domain nearest the harbour, I came upon a hulk moored close to the shore; and I may as well remark here that the water in Port Jackson is generally very deep, so that vessels of the largest class can be moored close up to the city. The said hulk, I found, had been converted into a bathing-machine, round which bathers could swim secure from sharks, which swarm in Port Jackson, and of the largest size. A spot about fifty yards from the hulk was pointed out to me where a too adventurous person had had his leg nipped off by one of these monsters. This fact considerably cooled my growing desire for a good long swim.

“The Domain” altogether does great credit to the place; and its shady walks, from which one

gets every now and then beautiful peeps at the harbour and shipping, are especially appreciable in a hot climate.

In the Botanic Gardens there was at this time of year no great display of flowers, but they are most tastefully laid out and planted with rare trees and shrubs. Among others my attention was attracted by a weeping willow, and other common European trees, which flourish here in all the dignity of exotics.

The band of the regiment stationed at Sydney played in the Domain in the evening. There was a considerable attendance of carriages, and ladies and gentlemen on horseback; altogether, a very fashionable-looking assemblage. It was hard to conceive that one was in what had so lately been a convict settlement.

I made several boating excursions with a newly-made acquaintance about the harbour. One morning we rowed to a sweet little land-locked bay, where we had a good luncheon from the oysters that covered the rocks around. As most of the oysters had their shells open,—taking an airing, I suppose,—we had no bother about opening them; we only had to be quick in knocking the upper

shell off before the animals had time to close them, and they were at the mercy of our pepper and vinegar.

This little creek looked quite fairy-like, with its smooth transparent water, and the intensely blue Australian sky overhead, contrasting strongly with the red sandstone rock and dark foliaged shrubs with which it was clothed. At the extreme end of the bay, which was oblong in shape, a thin stream of clear fresh water, icy cold, splashed merrily down to the foot of the rock, where a little basin was naturally hollowed out for its reception; but this pleasant bay was no exception to the rule that everything in this world has its drawback, for sharks, I was told, show *their* taste for the picturesque by especially frequenting it.

As we sailed back to Sydney we passed a small island, the surface of which—about equal to that of a line-of-battle ship—had been levelled with a view to placing a battery upon it. This islet rejoices in the elegant name of Pipchgut; appropriate enough, and suggestive of unpleasant consequences to any enemy attempting to reach Sydney by the harbour. However, its name had no origin in the use to which it was destined at

## THE SUCCESSFUL DIGGER.

this time, but to the fact that in years gone by a convict had, for some reason or other, been left alone upon it, and had suffered severely from hunger.

I only took one ride into the country near Sydney, which I found so bleak and desolate that I was not tempted to another. Only the *immediate* environs of the town and harbour are at all beautiful.

At my lodgings I became acquainted with a man who had lately left the Victoria diggings, where he had made about £800 by gold digging. I suppose his success, and the fact that he had had great colonial experience, induced me to agree to accompany him on his return, for he was by no means an individual of even common prudence,—as he had managed to get rid of nearly all the money he had brought with him from Victoria, during a holiday of a few weeks' duration at Sydney. His gold had indeed been very easily come by,—in a few days, by merely turning up the surface-soil,—and it certainly fulfilled the proverb about riches easily acquired, by being spent as easily. However, at this time, in the first flush of the diggings, the most extravagant



notions about the gold being inexhaustible were prevalent; and this man was possessed with an idea that at any time a few hundreds might be got at the diggings, almost for the trouble of picking up, which was certainly not without some foundation, and with which, to a certain degree, he inoculated me.

We took our passage in a ship that was to sail shortly from the port of Newcastle, about eighty miles north of Sydney. The accommodation in the steamer by which we went to Newcastle was quite equal to that in most English steamers.

Newcastle—though at this time it was not so large as many a good-sized English village—was dignified by the title of “city,” having a bishop of its own: it owes its name and existence to the coal-mines in the neighbourhood. The coal strata may be seen from the beach in the face of the cliff.

We put up in a comfortable hotel,—that is to say, comfortable, *colonially* speaking, for hotels are very differently managed in Victoria and England; not that I mean to praise the latter country in this respect, there being still immense room for improvement, as letters from overcharged and

disgusted travellers often show : and this difference is partly accounted for by the fact that, labour being so dear and scarce, landlords cannot generally have their hotels built sufficiently large for each guest—if he chooses—to have even a separate bed-room, much less a sitting-room, to himself. The consequence is, that new arrivals from England soon become perforce less exclusive in their habits than at home, taking their meals at the same table with the landlord, his family, and the other guests, instead of in surly solitude.

I very soon found it desirable to change my insular habits in this respect, and to regard any one sitting next me at the public dinner-table, or smoking in a neighbouring chair, as a more or less intimate acquaintance for the time being ; and many pleasant chats have I had in this off-hand way with men whom I never saw before, and frequently regretted I should never, in all probability, see again ; and I have found from experience that this free intercourse does undoubtedly tend to enlarge one's sympathies with all classes of people, to counteract narrow-minded exclusiveness, and to make one *realize* the saying, "*Nihil humanum à me alienum puto.*"

My "mate" and I occupied the same sitting-room at our hotel at Newcastle with three merchant skippers, one of whom had his wife with him. We were all as sociable as if we had known each other for years, making up various picnic and boating parties. At the latter we sometimes took fishing-lines with us, but we generally managed to catch more young sharks than anything else.

I had my first experience of the Bush at this time. We had agreed upon an excursion to the station of a squatter, a friend of one of the party, and, when I had provided myself with an apparently quiet old stock-horse, we started.

My stirrups being too short, I had sufficient confidence in the quiet disposition of my steed to alter them while he was going at a walking pace; the said animal, at first, evincing his contentment with this arrangement by dropping his head now and then for a quiet nibble at the short burnt-up grass. While I was in the midst of operations, bending over on one side, without a moment's warning, he started off at a quick trot and gallop, before I had time to seize the bridle, which had somehow nearly slipped over his head, so that I

could not reach it without imperilling my seat, which, bridleless and stirrupless as I was, was by no means secure. However, I grasped the horse's mane, and, summoning up whatever presence of mind I happened to possess, stuck on as well as I could. The pace the brute went, considering our course lay along a narrow path, with not a few turnings and windings through a dense forest, was sufficiently trying to my nerves. The way he darted short round trees, after the manner of Australian stock-horses, as if turning on a pivot, imparted to me a tendency, which I could hardly resist, to fly off in the opposite direction, like a stone from a sling, and I was obliged to keep perpetually bowing my head to avoid the branches of acacia and other trees of low growth, to say nothing of every now and then having a hairbreadth escape of getting my legs scraunched against some tree-trunk. The closeness with which the horse just managed to shave the trees, so as barely to avoid bringing my leg in contact with them, was suggestive of that Indian game of tomahawks I have somewhere read about, in which the point is to throw the weapons as near the prisoner's head as possible without striking it.

The horse stopped as suddenly as he had started, nearly pitching me over his head.

To do him justice, however, he behaved with great decorum after this frisk during the rest of the ride.

A well-trained Australian stock-horse is certainly a remarkable instance of the effect of education. I have seen stock-horses, when employed in driving cattle, double upon them, and dodge them in all sorts of ways, leap over or avoid fallen trees,—all the time perhaps nearly at full speed,—in a manner that made it appear that the horse, rather than his rider, was the reasoning animal, as with bridle loose the stock-man seemed to be a mere machine to frighten the cattle by the rifle-like cracks of his whip, leaving the more intricate duties to his steed.

The stock-whip is a terrible instrument in expert hands. The handle is short, while the lash is several yards long, very thick near the handle, and tapering away to almost nothing. It is an expensive thing to buy. I knew a man who had been a stock-man, who was famed for his whips, and made a great deal of money by manufacturing them.

To return to our excursion. We arrived without any further mishap at the squatter's house, or rather hut, for it was a most primitive, two-roomed affair of only one floor, built with rough slabs of wood placed upright, with sufficiently wide intervals between to admit both air and light freely. The floor was the bare earth, hardened by being constantly walked over. The chimney was also made of slabs of wood, lined to a height of about three feet with large unhewn stones, placed edgewise. The fire-place was about twelve or fourteen feet wide, and contained a large portion of the trunk of a good-sized tree. It would scarcely have been habitable in a less genial climate than that of Australia; but it was in fact the home of a very well-to-do man, who lived in a state of rough, patriarchal plenty. I here ate my first genuine bush meal, consisting of salt beef, black fish, not unlike small trout, from the neighbouring river Hunter, wild honey, damper (unleavened bread), and strong green tea, the common drink in the Australian bush.

I have omitted to mention the church at Newcastle, a most primitive-looking building, quite a

reproduction of an old English country-church, with high pews, etc. The similarity was increased by the nasal twang and pronunciation of the clerk, and the execrable singing. I never *enjoyed* such singing till then; it reminded me so forcibly of home scenes of the like kind.

After a detention at Newcastle of nearly three weeks, by a delay in the sailing of the ship, we at last actually set sail, and bade adieu to a place where the time had passed pleasantly enough. Our friends came down to the beach to see the last of us, and there was really a good deal of regret and waving of handkerchiefs as we dropped down the river with the tide.

## CHAPTER IV.

## PREPARATIONS FOR THE DIGGINGS.

Our fellow-passengers consisted principally of men intending to try their luck at the Victoria diggings, or of successful diggers returning thither, after a "spree" at Sydney; rough fellows, for the most part,—all shaggy hair, long beards, \*moustaches, and jack-boots; altogether not unlike a company of bandits or pirates. The cargo was coals and horses, two of which belonged to my party. We had a long, rough voyage, and the majority of the horses died; among others one of ours. It was quite sad to see them being thrown overboard to the sharks whenever, almost, one came on deck.

One evening, when most of us were below, playing at cards, reading or sleeping, we were startled by a commotion on deck, and on hastening forward a small vessel was dimly discernible,



—though close to us,—through the darkness and driving surge. It seemed that we could not, except by a miracle, avoid running her down, in which case all on board must have perished, as in such a night it would have been impossible to lower the boats to pick any one up. Our ship was on the summit of a huge wave, the little vessel in the hollow beneath, and we were breathlessly awaiting the crash, fully expecting that the next moment would send her to the bottom; but providentially no crash came, though we shaved close to her stern. I returned below with a nervous, creeping sensation at the narrowness of her escape from instant and utter destruction. •

One of the steerage passengers, a married man, was unfortunate enough to lose several horses, and the cabin passengers so far commiserated him as to subscribe some thirty pounds towards making up the loss, thinking him poor.

However he turned out to be tolerably well off, and so little appreciated this liberality from utter strangers that he received the money (which under the circumstances he ought to have returned) with the remark, that, though he didn't want it himself, it would do for a "spree,"—and a spree

accordingly he had with his associates in the steerage, keeping himself and them in a state of uproarious drunkenness for several days, to the annoyance of his would-be benefactors. We did not know the real state of the case till after he had the money in his possession ; and as it was, we had to pocket the conviction that we had been sold, as best we might,—the villain, probably an old convict, no doubt meanwhile chuckling to himself at the idea of having done the “new chums” in the cabin.

After ten days’ tedious voyage, I entered Hobson’s Bay for the second time. The shipping in port had greatly increased in number even during my few weeks’ absence. Among them I saw the vessel that afterwards took me home, ‘The Marcco Polo,’—then an object of interest from having made the quickest voyage out on record. Could I have foreseen at the time that it would be her lot, years after, to take me home to Old England, with what interest I should have singled her out from the other ships !

We landed at Williamstown, then an assemblage of a few small houses, a store or two, and a public-house, since grown to an important town.

Instead of proceeding at once to Melbourne, where we should have had to pay three pounds a week at least for very indifferent board and lodging, sleeping in the same bedroom with half a dozen strangers, we improvised a temporary shelter, by covering our dray with a large tarpaulin, fastening the ends down to the ground, under which gipsy-like habitation we crept at night ;—and, wrapped up in our blankets, we all sought and found, I expect, that rest which is sometimes, it has been said, denied to people much better off for a bed than we were. There were many other like habitations, as well as tents near us, some of whose occupants were, or we fancied so, suspicious looking characters enough ; anyhow, mutual suspicions appeared to be the order of the day, as nearly everybody was more or less armed, and at sunset there was a regular fusilade of guns and revolvers, by way of a caution to all thieves. We thought it prudent to keep a regular watch every night.

I now began to find out the difference between having servants to minister to my requirements, and having everything to do for myself ; and I practically experienced the disadvantage, now

I was entirely thrown upon my own resources, of not having been educated to use my hands in a variety of ways. In spite of the "diggings" dress I had donned,—consisting of cabbage-tree hat, blue serge shirt, moleskin trowsers, and jack-boots,—I could not disguise from myself (nor, as I soon discovered, from others) the uncomfortable conviction that I was, so far as most kinds of manual labour were concerned, a thorough sham. I had however the consolation, such as it was, of seeing that many others were no better than myself in these respects. I could not harness a horse, cook a beef-steak properly, nor make a damper; the latter a most important accomplishment in Australia, and more especially at a time when the price of bread at the diggings was six shillings a loaf.

We had an addition of two to our party in Melbourne, and we bought another horse, which turned out an incorrigible jib; not an uncommon thing in Victoria, at a time when anything in the shape of a horse was eagerly snapped up before being properly broken in. We managed to get rid of him, but we could not get even a tolerable draught horse under £120, and as the one that

survived the voyage from Sydney was not strong enough to draw by himself, we sold our dray and contented ourselves with pack-horses.

The captain of the ship that brought us from Newcastle paid us a visit in our encampment: he was on the look-out for a passenger who had defrauded him of some ten pounds in the following way. There were on board an old man and his son, who had travelled a great deal all over the world, and made themselves generally agreeable to everybody, but especially to the captain. Moreover, they solaced many a weary hour on board with their violins, on which they were proficient; and no one had any idea but that they were highly respectable. They had not however paid for their passage to Melbourne beforehand, as they ought to have done, but had managed to satisfy the captain that they would make it all right when they got to Melbourne; and he was the more readily imposed upon, as they brought some large and heavy boxes on board with them, which he regarded as securities for the money. So when these gentry landed at Melbourne, saying that they would bring the money when they returned for their luggage, the captain suspected

nothing ; but when a day or two elapsed, and they did not return, he began to be suspicious, and at length had the boxes opened, when lo, and behold ! there was nothing in them but sand and straw. His search was unsuccessful ; and I afterwards recognized the old man presiding over a lemonade and ginger-beer establishment for the benefit of thirsty diggers ; but doubtless the array of innocent-looking ginger-beer bottles was only a blind to the profitable, though hazardous and illicit trade of “ sly grog ” selling. The old villain looked sleek and prosperous.

Melbourne, at the time of my arrival, though as bustling and certainly more thriving than most towns of its size in the world, was inferior in every respect to what it is now. There were no foot pavements, the streets were often over one’s ankles in mud, and the drainage so bad (there is abundant room for improvement in that respect now) that I have seen some of the streets, after two or three days’ rain, with streams of water, too wide to jump, on each side, and the lucky owners of drays reaping a golden harvest, by carting people across at sixpence a head.

The houses were for the most part of wood.

and of only one story. There were none of the present handsome stone houses, shops, and public buildings.

Melbourne was swarming with diggers, down for a "*sprees*;" and expensively but gaudily dressed women were to be seen driving about with them in carriages of all descriptions, hired at—I should be afraid to say how many pounds a day. I recollect one woman—a bride, I imagine—dressed in light satin, and a profusion of gold chains, bracelets, etc.; her face, hands, and feet, being ludicrously out of character with her finery.

It was a common thing, I heard, at this period, for a digger, who had probably never had sixpence to spare at home, to go into a shop with his wife or sweetheart, and ask to see a handsome shawl or dress. The shopman would show them the most expensive articles he had, fit for any duchess, but the digger would throw them scornfully on one side, saying, he wanted something "*more expensive*," when the shopman probably brought out some inferior but gaudy thing, and asked double the price that he had for the first-shown article, and the customer would depart satisfied with his purchase.

The conduct of tradespeople in Melbourne towards their customers presented a most unfavourable contrast to the general civility of tradespeople in England. On several occasions I have seen articles thrown rudely on a counter, and if a selection was not made from them, the customer was roughly told to get what he required elsewhere. Change for a sixpence was never given, nor indeed expected, that coin having much the same market value as farthings at home. Such an utterly undreamed-of tide of prosperity had set in towards the trading community, that their heads were completely turned. Sudden riches had had the usual effect of making vulgar people insolent.

Increased competition and an occasional glut of goods in the market have since then brought them in a very great measure to their senses. Diggers, too, can now purchase nearly all they require on the gold-fields at about the same rate as in Melbourne; and as there are all kinds of places of amusement, such as theatres, etc., on the diggings, they frequently prefer enjoying their holidays there to Melbourne.

The independent manner, and *who cares for*



*you?* bearing of everybody, was especially noticeable. All distinction of class seemed utterly done away with, and indeed in many respects the relative positions of master and servant were changed. Servants could so easily get other places, or leave service altogether if they chose, and try their luck at the diggings, that their employers were afraid to find the slightest fault; and, if they wished to keep them at all, had to treat them with the utmost consideration and indulgence. In fact, there was a regular saturnalia going on. In one case a master was deserted by all his men, who went to the diggings in a body, so that he was compelled to leave his business, and went to the diggings himself, where he was glad at length to accept the situation of cook to his former servants.

I had intended to have brought out some fire-arms with me, on speculation, but allowed myself to be dissuaded by a friend, who urged the uncertainty of finding a market for them at a place where there was likely enough to be a glut of them before my arrival; but on landing I found that had I brought out a few dozen pairs of ordinary pistols, I might have made several hun-

dred pounds by them. As it was, having lost my bullet-mould, I went to several stores before I could get one to suit, and one gunsmith offered me more than ten pounds for my pistols, though they had only cost me thirty shillings at Liverpool. The most unserviceable fire-arms were eagerly bought at extravagantly high prices, for no new arrival deemed himself in any degree safe without a gun or pistol of some sort. The smallest-sized Colt's revolvers were selling at £30 and £40 each.

Highly coloured reports were general about the dangers from the bush-rangers of the Black Forest; which reports, I have little doubt, were not discouraged, if not often got up, by the gunsmiths themselves.

The new arrivals—some of whom had possibly never fired a gun in their lives—frequently armed themselves to such an unnecessary extent, that they might very easily have been mistaken for bush-rangers themselves, equipped as they often were, not only with guns and pistols, but also with daggers, or long knives, and wearing jack-boots and huge beards by way of imparting a ferocious aspect to their countenances.

However the bushrangers were not always to be duped by appearances, and I know of one well-authenticated case, in which a party of ten, armed *cap-à-pie*, were stopped by one *unarmed* bushranger, at whose order they all laid down their guns, which he discharged, and, having made them give up their money, contemptuously returned, and allowed them to go on their way.

It was and is a constant source of ambition among "*new chums*," especially the younger ones, to be taken for "*old hands*" in the colony, and they endeavour to gain this point by all manner of expedients, by encouraging the growth of their beards and moustaches to a prodigious length, as well as by affecting a colonial style of dress, and wearing dirty, battered cabbage-tree hats; but their efforts to appear "*colonial*" are not always so harmless, and, as swearing is an unusually common habit among the colonists, new arrivals often endeavour, and most successfully too, to become proficient in this easily acquired art, and soon add the stock of oaths peculiar to the colony (and *very* peculiar some of them are) to the "*home*" vocabulary.

But with all these attempts, it is very seldom indeed that they can impose upon a colonist of even a few years' standing. The old-country greenness is sure to sprout out somewhere; perhaps, though a man's dress may be quite *à la bush* in every other respect, a neatly-made thin-soled pair of boots—such as no old colonist would dream of wearing in the bush—may betray the fact that their cockney owner has never been accustomed to rougher walking than London pavements, or macadamized roads. I have seen men on their road to the *diggings*, strutting along, evidently thinking that they looked quite colonial in their bran-new blue shirts and mole-skins, but unaware that their black tiles were not *quite the fashion* in the bush, and would be the unarmed point that would provoke an abundance of rough chaff about “new chums” from the “old hands” they chanced to meet. Yes, the laws of fashion are, in their way, as strict in the bush as in Regent Street, and any man who had the hardihood to walk through any diggings, extensively got up in the last London fashion, would be exposed to as much ridicule as any one would be in England, who thought fit to appear in the

*streets in the costume of a gentleman of the reign of Henry V.*

I had been led to expect from books an abundance of all kinds of fruit of every climate in Victoria, but I was soon undeceived. Passing by a fruit-stall one day, I heedlessly took up and ate half-a-dozen tiny pears, each about a mouthful, and my feelings may be guessed when I found myself in for it to the extent of sixpence each, the regular market price. This reminds me of seeing in the newspapers an account about two young men, fresh from the confined dietary scale on board ship, taking a little holiday among the good things at a Melbourne pastrycook's. As the value of each article of pastry represented a shilling or sixpence, one can imagine the sly complacency with which the good man of the shop regarded each tart as it disappeared, and the regretful thoughts of the hapless victims when they became enlightened to the fact that their joint reckoning amounted to the tidy little sum of thirty shillings.

Fruit and vegetables of nearly every kind *could* be grown in Victoria, and *are* plentiful enough in some private gardens, though so dear

to buy ; but time will no doubt work a change in this and other colonial matters, abundance of fruit and vegetables being especially essential to health in a hot climate. I have heard it stated by medical men as their belief, that the alarming mortality among young children in Victoria, particularly in Melbourne, is attributable to their too exclusively meat diet.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE WAY TO THE DIGGINGS.

At length we got under weigh for the Bendigo diggings, the pack-horses being loaded—poor things!—to the last ounce, with our tent, flour, meat, blankets, and other necessities, besides some superfluities, such as pickles, and a few bottles of Harvey's Sauce, which one of the party—who still had an eye to the fleshpots of Egypt—absurdly insisted upon bringing with him. As it was, the rest of the party had compelled him to leave several things in the shape of luxuries behind; but we obligingly indulged him, to the extent above noticed, as he had volunteered as cook to the expedition.

Before starting, we had stored all our belongings, which we did not absolutely require, in Melbourne.

I found three shirts, (one an outer one, of blue

serge,) three pair of socks, two pair of mole-skin unmentionables, a strong pilot jacket, and a strong spare pair of boots, as much as I could conveniently take with me ; and, indeed, amply sufficient for the primitive life we were about to lead, though such a wardrobe may seem alarming enough to a civilized community. I packed what was not actually in wear in a little oil-skin knapsack, with a small book or two ; and I may here as well say that I would strongly recommend travellers, who mean to rough it as I did, to use a small air-bed, which takes up but little room, or at least to spread a piece of waterproof cloth under their blankets to keep them from the damp.

We had hardly started before the rain came down in torrents ; and, when we had got about seven miles from Melbourne, as evening was coming on, we made ready to halt for the night.

Unloading the horses, and pitching the tent on the wet ground in heavy rain, was not a pleasant process. The new rope with which the baggage was tied had swollen, and the knots became so tight as to delay us considerably in undoing them.



The tent was however set up at last, supported on a rope, drawn tight between two small trees; a very convenient method in travelling, when one does not want to have the trouble of cutting a ridge-pole and uprights at every halt. Kindling a fire was the next thing to be done; a work of time and difficulty, as all the fuel round us was soaking wet. Luckily, one of the party was well used to bush travelling, and was equal to the emergency. He gathered a quantity of gum-tree leaves, which contain a great proportion of gas,—and are sometimes used in Australia in the manufacture of gas, where coal is not to be had,—and placed over them all the dead wood we could find about: he then stripped some bark from the side of a *stringy-bark* tree least exposed to the rain, made a miniature fire with it on a shovel, (under shelter of the tent, to the great annoyance of our eyes and nostrils,) and placed it under the pile of wet fuel and gum-leaves outside; and, after a little perseverance, we soon had a roaring fire, to which we added, from time to time, huge logs, as large as two of us could carry, from the surrounding forest. Stringy-bark is of the greatest use in lighting a fire under

difficulties, as it is fibrous, of loose texture, and about two inches thick. Lighting a fire may seem to the reader a simple thing to write about; but any new arrival in the colony, who finds himself alone in the bush in wet weather, will, I am pretty sure, be glad of the above hints.

The cheery singing of the kettle, and a pannikin of hot tea, with pipes, soothed our tempers with a sense of comfort to which we had been strangers for some hours,\* as we complacently contemplated the bonfire without. When daylight failed, and we were snugly wrapped up in our blankets, the snow-white interior of the new tent, lighted up by the flickering fire-light outside, was very pleasant to behold; contrasted, as it was, with the sound of rain pattering on the canvas, the howling of the wind, and the creaking and groaning of the huge trees in the wilderness around us.

What a cozy little oasis our tent presented for the storm to beat upon!—the sense of comparative comfort being rather enhanced than otherwise by the apprehension that it might be but very short-lived; that a stronger gust than ordinary might prove at any moment too much for

the tent ropes, which as yet held the ground pretty well, though straining greatly. All our hopes for the time were centred in them, as a sailor's in his cable when anchored on a lee-shore.

Several times, as a blast every now and then swept down upon us with a roar, like the concentrated fury of many wild beasts, making the very ground shake under us, and bringing large branches here and there crashing to the ground,—we thought it impossible that the tent could withstand it any longer; but happily it bore the utmost fury of the wind most gallantly,—probably owing to its being of very low pitch. Had it yielded, it would, of course, have been impossible to pitch it again in such a storm; but at length the rain ceased, the wind gradually died away, and a refreshing calm succeeded. When the moon shone forth at intervals, as the clouds cleared off, the shadows the now slightly waving branches cast upon the tent gave it, from the inside, an appearance of being pitched beneath the shelter of some fairy-like bower. With this soothing idea in my head I began to doze a little; but as the last cloud departed, and left the moon shining

## THE LAUGHING JACKASS.

steadily, a Babel of voices from various wild animals and birds commenced, such as I should imagine is seldom heard out of Australia;—most uncanny sounds. First there was a groundwork noise of frogs, unlike anything ever heard in England. This was accompanied by a sound, at an interval of a second or so, like that produced by pulling the string of a violoncello; and a loud, regular tapping, like a carpenter hitting a thin board with a hammer. Now and then this concert was enlivened by the indescribably disagreeable squeal of the wild cat, which must be heard to be duly appreciated. Any further attempt at sleep was out of the question. There were other noises, but the above were the most prominent, and continued unceasingly till dawn, at the first streak of which the “voices of the night” ceased by degrees, and a neighbouring laughing jackass—as the bird is called—began a sort of subdued, derisive chuckle, soon swelling to apparently uncontrollable laughter; then his mate’s voice joined in,—for they generally frequent some one tree in pairs,—and the two laughed in concert, till they appeared to be quite convulsed; when, seemingly exhausted, the laughter died away as

gradually as it had begun. By this time all the birds in the bush were awake,—as well they might be,—uttering their various *cries* and *notes* ; for in Australia, no birds that I ever heard have any sustained song as in Europe, though the notes of some of them are musical enough.

The voice of the laughing jackass is a most efficient substitute for the “cock’s shrill clarion,” being heard far and wide, at dawn and sunset. The laugh has been compared to that of the hyena. For some time after my arrival the bush seemed to me like a vast aviary, as the birds were of course strange to me both as to song and plumage,—which latter is, in general, most brilliant,—but their beauty did not, I regret to say, save them from our guns ; and many a parrot and cockatoo were consigned to the care of our cook, in a land where a *lark*, or any other common English bird, is esteemed as a rarity that it would be an act of insane barbarism to kill.

Before the sun had risen at all high, after performing our ablutions in a neighbouring stream, we proceeded on our way, driving our pack-horses in front as before. Truly we might have said with the poet :—

"Here, Arab-like, is pitched our tent,  
And straight again is furled."

Our course lay along a track well beaten by expectant diggers, through a level country, not unlike an English park, though the trees are wild-looking, the huge boughs—often nearly as thick as the trunk itself—branching out high from the ground, and gnarled and twisted in a strange manner. Their evergreen foliage is of a dark cypress shade, instead of the fresh and varied tint that so surprises and charms an Australian on his arrival in Europe. The foliage of the Australian trees does not afford anything like so good a protection against the heat as European trees, as the leaves are narrow, and their *edges*, instead of their *surfaces*, are presented to the mid-day sun. Instead of shedding their *leaves* periodically, after the usual manner, Australian trees cast their *bark* annually, in ribbon-like strips, sometimes thirty or forty feet long,—the whiteness of the young bark now exposed giving them somewhat the appearance of newly scraped masts.

We picked up, as we walked along, quantities of what is called "manna," a small round

substance of snowy whiteness, exuding from the branches of a species of gum-tree. The palatable sweetness of this manna is strongly in contrast with the extreme bitterness of the leaves and bark of the tree under which it is found. As the morning advanced the heat became intense; but about noon it was tempered by a faint though steady sea-breeze from the south, as is usually the case in Victoria.

When it was about time for our midday halt, the welcome tinkling of the sheep-bell-like note of the bell-bird announced the presence of water; for this bird always takes up its residence near some stream or swamp. I was glad of the halt, my feet being tender from the inactivity of a long voyage, and already much blistered; but before resting ourselves, we unloosed the burdens from the poor horses, and it was pleasing to see them enjoying a good roll, and nibbling from the scanty but wholesome herbage.

I am convinced no aldermanic turtle was ever anticipated or enjoyed with greater zest than our midday meals at this time; though we had, of course, to be our own waiters, when, hot and tired as we were, we should have fully appre-

ciated the luxury of being served. Our drink was tea, milkless; but we could take no credit to ourselves for becoming teetotallers, for beer or wine was not to be had, or only at prohibitive prices—such as ten shillings or a pound per bottle—the price being on a sliding scale, according to the distance from Melbourne. The inns, mere shanties, few and far between on the road to the diggings, now drove a thriving trade; and the publicans were, as a rule, insolent in proportion to their prosperity. I was told of one man's selling the good-will of a pot-house for £10,000. I do not think we were losers by this deprivation of beer or spirituous drinks; for I can affirm, from my own experience, and that of others, that there is nothing like a pannikin (we had no crockery with us) of good strong tea, when exhausted with travelling: its reviving effects, after great fatigue, I always found far more lasting and cheering than that produced by alcoholic drinks. I do not wish my friends to understand, though, that I have any objection to a good glass of ale or wine on *ordinary* occasions,—quite the contrary.

Some time before sunset we always managed



to come upon some stream, water-hole, or swamp, though water was often very difficult to find, and I expect we should have fared badly enough in this respect if one of our party had not travelled the same route before.

Whenever we camped near a swamp the sportsmen of the party would wade through the water after wild duck, and seldom or never failed to bring back several brace,—while the rest of us unloaded the horses and pitched the tent.

With the ducks, and any parrots or cockatoos we had shot during our march, we managed to concoct a gipsy-like stew, that gave us no reason to envy the repasts of any alderman in London.

I had had hitherto so little to do with horses, that, provided their size and colour was the same, they appeared to me as ships do to landsmen, all very much alike. This want of knowledge in equine matters caused me one morning to make an absurd blunder, that might have led to very unpleasant consequences. I was looking for one of our horses that had strayed during the night, in spite of being hobbled. After searching for him till I wellnigh began to despair of success, I all at once espied one that I

made sure was ours, being about the same size and colour, and otherwise generally like. I threw a halter over his neck, and was leading him off, when I heard some one hallooing behind; and when the man came up to me, greatly to my surprise, he claimed the horse as his in a sufficiently rough and decided way. At first I thought I had to deal with some bush-ranger, and was nerving myself up for a tussle for the ownership, when another animal appeared on the scene, which turned out to be mine. I felt relieved, but rather small—as well I might—and withdrew with my own property as quietly as may be under a smart parting salute of chaff and abuse.

During this journey I became initiated into the mysteries of damper-making, which is performed thus :—A large fire is made of dead wood, and while this is burning a quantity of flour is kneaded in a large shallow tin dish, or upon a piece of bark, into a round cake about a couple of inches thick, and of a diameter proportionate to the number of eaters. When the fire has burnt down, the hot ashes are taken away with a shovel, and the damper placed on the cleared spot and covered up again with ashes. It re-

quires turning once, and generally takes from half an hour to three-quarters before it is baked; a result pretty accurately discovered by striking it with the shovel. If it returns a hollow sound, the damper is presumed to be done. It is well, when baked, to place it on its edge against a tree for a short time, as it is otherwise apt to become heavy. Instead of damper we occasionally made what are colonially known as "devils on the coals," which I imagine are somewhat similar to Indian chupatties. They are convenient when there is not time to make damper, as only a minute or so is required to bake them. They are made about the size of a captain's biscuit, and as thin as possible, thrown on the embers and turned quickly with the hand.

Unconsciously, it seems, we were relapsing into patriarchal habits, for I imagine our baking was carried on after much the same fashion as when "Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth." (Gen. xviii. 6.)

I have often myself hastened to make "cakes on the hearth" for any stray comers to my tent,

and I have read in Burder's 'Oriental Customs' that to this day in the East it is customary to bake bread in thin cakes.

The whole route to the diggings, though it lay through what had been, but a few months before, pathless forest, was changed by the gold mania to quite an animated scene. It was impossible to go a mile without passing or meeting travellers. All sorts of conveyances,—from the go-ahead four-horse American van recklessly driven, and the heavily-laden bullock or horse-dray, to the hand-cart with a team of men harnessed to it,—thronged the track. Those who could not afford to pay for the carriage of their swags were content to stagger under a load of blankets, picks and shovels, tin-pots and pannikins. In swampy districts we often came upon drays in difficulties, *bogged* in the mud up to their axletrees, obliging the drivers to unload and dig the earth from the wheels; starting again, after a delay of an hour or so, only to fall into the same trouble, perhaps a hundred yards further on, often in sight of the scenes of similar recent disasters. We could afford to bestow our *pity* upon these victims to bad roads, as our pack-horses were

not liable to such mishaps ; and at first we were philanthropic enough to give them what aid we could ; but these cases of being bogged proved, as we proceeded, so frequent, that we found we could not afford the delay, and soon learned to "pass by on the other side" with the utmost indifference.

I noticed or fancied a considerable contrast in expression in the faces of those who were going to, or returning from the diggings, characteristic of their relative positions : the former, as a rule, having the resolute mien of men determined to do their best to earn fortunes ; the latter, if successful, dashing past us on horseback, or in light cars, with the exulting or satisfied look consequent on success ; or, if unsuccessful, as was much more often the case, creeping wearily along on foot, in garments that bore the stains of weeks' or months' unsuccessful toil, frequently as they met us, obligingly treating us with observations disparaging the diggings, and calculated to damp our spirits to the level of their own.

Travellers in Australia often sleep under their drays, entirely covering them with a tarpaulin reaching to the ground ; but it is well to be care-

ful to camp on firm ground, lest, as is sometimes the case, the wheels should sink imperceptibly till the body of the dray crushes the sleepers. I knew myself one instance of the kind attended with fatal consequences. After heavy and continued rain, the hot sun speedily hardens the surface of swampy land sufficiently to form a crust firm enough to bear passing drays even heavily laden, but, the subsoil being still wet, a stationary dray is liable to sink.

We crossed several streams dignified in this comparatively waterless land by the name of rivers, which were in reality mere brooks. One or two of these so-called rivers were represented simply by their dry beds. In a parched-up country any appearance of water is so unspeakably pleasant to the traveller that I suppose a sort of mental *mirage* causes rivulets to be magnified into rivers.

We passed the dreaded Black Forest unscathed, though the Melbourne reports had so far affected me that I felt just a very little nervous on entering it. At this time, over and above any other robbers that might be located there, a band of four mounted bushrangers were said to be espe-

cially formidable ; and one day, during a halt at noon, the appearance at a little distance of three suspicious-looking men splendidly mounted made us look to our fire-arms, and spread a nervously warlike feeling through our party, as we did not feel inclined to part tamely with our belongings, little as one of us at least relished the idea of fighting. These three worthy knights, however, did not put our mettle to the test ; perhaps they were after higher game, or it is just possible they were only successful diggers going to Melbourne for a spree.

The traces of the terrible hush-fire that swept over Victoria some years ago were visible in the Forest in the blackened trunks of very many of the trees. One can tell the quarter from which the fire came, by the trees being blackened in that direction. Many stations, and a vast quantity of cattle and sheep were burned, as well as wild animals and birds. \* I have heard it said, that the ashes from the conflagration fell thickly like a fine powder upon the decks of ships forty or fifty miles out to sea.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE DIGGINGS.

ONE evening, towards the end of October, we arrived at the Bendigo diggings. We entered them near the Kangaroo Gully, to which a rush had lately taken place. Rain was falling on our arrival; and the wet, dripping, well-like holes, and the mud-covered figures of the diggers emerging from them, presented no very charming prospect to a new hand.

I have known instances of men going up to the diggings with the most magnanimous resolution never to leave them till they had filled their pockets with gold, upon whose untried courage the mere first sight of these holes, with the earth thrown up like huge mole-hills all round them, acted as a damper, and caused them to retreat without even putting a pick to the earth. Of



course, they must have been quite unused to any sort of hard labour.

Happily the weather very soon cleared up, and we proceeded to pitch our tent near the Kangaroo Gully, where we intended to commence operations.

While two of my "*mates*" looked after the horses, and one put the interior of the tent to rights, I started off to fill a kettle from the creek, about three hundred yards distant. On my return, I was utterly puzzled as to which was our particular tent among the numerous similar ones. I wandered about, feeling rather ridiculous; for, of course, it was of no use whatever to ask the way, one tent having but little to distinguish it from another. Once or twice, on putting my head into a tent I thought *must* be my own, I got a volley of oaths and abuse for the intrusion; and once a pistol was cocked and pointed at me. The daylight had almost gone, and the light from the numerous fires before the tents only added to my confusion. As no one could help me, I did not care to betray the fact that I had lost myself so close to home, which seemed to me absurd enough,—though it was by no

means an unusual event on the diggings, especially at night, when the hundreds of fires were enough to mislead anybody. However, I put on as indifferent a manner as possible ; and, kettle in hand, sauntered up to any man that happened to be standing outside his tent, and made a pretence of talking to him, while I anxiously tried to discern, by sight or sound, the whereabouts of my comrades, but in vain.

Presently, the evening fusilade of guns and pistols from nearly every tent on the diggings commenced ; here and there some extravagant fellow firing off a six-barrelled revolver, by way of letting all night-prowlers know what they might expect if they went near him.

Now and then some savage watch-dog would make a rush at me, or as I stumbled over the tent-ropes in the darkness I received threats and cursings from within.

The situation I was in is laughable enough to look back upon, but I cannot recollect having ever been in a more unpleasant one.

I was almost beginning to imagine that I was doomed to be a sort of shore-going Flying Dutchman, ever wandering near my tent, kettle in

hand, but never able to find it, when the voice of one of my mates revealed the fact that I had been quite near home for the last quarter of an hour. I said nothing about my kettle adventure, though they wondered why I had been so long gone. Another of our party lost himself a few evenings after, and wandered about all night.

The morning after our arrival, we marked out our claims and commenced work. When I had toiled with pick and shovel for about four hours I felt rather done up; my back ached all over, my hands were raw, and I moreover felt disgusted that I had not—notwithstanding having really worked hard—sunk my own height. From the waist upwards I was still above ground; and, to my further discomfiture, some fellows who had observed my prodigious exertions, ridiculed its insignificant result. I was, in fact, utterly used up; and my spirits were not refreshed when one of my mates found fault with the shape of the hole I had dug, drawing my attention to a fact which in my zeal I had overlooked, viz. that the sides of the hole sloped so much, inwards, that a few feet further down I should have no standing-room to work in, a not uncommon mis-

take with inexperienced diggers. Before this, my first taste of labour, my dreams of digging had been entirely golden-hued. A few weeks before, my hopes had been flattered by seeing a man washing in a basin some eight hundred pounds' worth of nuggets and gold dust, the result of two or three weeks' labour. I was dazzled, and only considered the result: raw hands and an aching back were altogether left out in my calculations; and, as I rested them for a few moments, the words of the Eton Latin grammar—hateful book to my boyhood—came into my mind,—“*Effodiuntur opes, irritamenta malorum,*” though I do not suppose exactly that the poet meant them to be applied in such a new and practical sense. I argued—if I am so done up with a few hours' work, how can I stand several months' toil? I was so tired at noon that I could scarcely touch my dinner; and I was not at all consoled on discovering that one of my mates had done twice as much work as I, and his comparative freshness seemed like a rebuke to me.

The truth was, that, being utterly unused to labour, I had begun digging with an energy that few men could have kept up, and without any

system. I expected hard blows would do it all. I had yet to learn that there is a degree of art even in the commonest kind of labour, and that a man must commence work, if he means to do any good, with an energy proportionate to the strain he can bear throughout the day. I had an idea that my utmost exertions would not enable me to do more than my share of work, and so my zeal outran my strength, instead of keeping pace with it. I became wiser, however, in time. Let all "*new chums*" take warning by me. When I had learned to begin as I was able to go on, I found that I could do an average day's work.

A few days after our arrival we "*prospected*" the diggings a little; that is, we took a walk, and tried to worm what information we could out of the other diggers as to the most likely places for hitting upon gold. We got a good many surly answers, and, doubtless, much false information; it was not probable, indeed, that men who were greedily searching for gold themselves would tell us where to find it; but now and then we managed to take them off their guard.

Sunday seemed outwardly well kept on the Bendigo; *i. e.* I saw no one digging, and only

one or two cradles rocking in a surreptitious manner, as if the owners were ashamed of themselves. I have no doubt, though, the sly grog tents and public-houses lost nothing by the general cessation from labour. Considering that the population came from all parts of the world, many of them rough characters, and of creeds as numerous as the countries from which they came, I was not a little surprised to find Sunday so decently observed. No doubt the hard physical exertion during the week, and the consequent necessity of rest, in a great measure accounted for the general quiet that reigned around. Since I was on the diggings I have heard that chapels and churches have been built on all the principal gold-fields, and occasionally the Bishop of Melbourne has open-air services, addressing his rough congregation from the stump of some felled tree.

The appearance of the diggings has been so often described, that I will not weary the reader by any lengthened description; but, as people look at things from points of view more or less different, it will not be well perhaps to pass the subject over altogether. Imagine then, indulgent

readers thousands of tents, like an irregular encampment, interspersed with innumerable heaps of earth like large mole-hills, that have been thrown up from the surrounding holes. Further, imagine these tents and mole-hills scattered over hill and dale for a distance of about seven or eight miles long by two or three broad, the store-tents, distinguished by gaily coloured flags, imparting at a little distance a fair-like aspect to a locality bare enough in itself, as every tree on the diggings, and for some distance round, is soon cut down for fire-wood, etc.; but on a nearer approach, the bustle and work that is everywhere going on, and the dusty forms of the diggers in red and blue shirts, for the most part bearded like brigands, the perpetual noise of picks and shovels, the splashing sound of puddling the earth in large tubs, the rattling of the cradles in which the earth is washed after the puddling process, soon dispel all ideas of its being like a fair. Everybody looks earnest and absorbed in the engrossing work in hand; far too busy to give any but the shortest answers to any casual inquirer, unless indeed he happen to come upon a digger who has emerged from the lower

regions of the earth for a few minutes' smoke and rest, an indulgence which every man was of course free to give himself when he liked ; as the word " master " was not to be found in the vocabulary at that time, though I expect things have altered a little since the quartz-crushing companies have started ; but still a man may always, if he chooses, work on the diggings on his own account.

Here and there a seller of summer-drinks tries to lure dust-choked diggers by a tempting display of lemonade, ginger-beer, etc., dispensed at a shilling per glass. In the stores the same stir and bustle is seen. No time for any bargaining or demur at the charges. " Buy, or go as quick as you like," is what every storekeeper's face expresses plainer than words. Their manner however was quite different when men came in to sell their gold ; and the position of the storekeeper was thus reversed, he becoming the customer for the time. He would put the gold-dust on a tray, or sheet of paper, and blow every speck of earth away, and not seldom, I shrewdly suspect, some of the finer gold-dust itself ; he would perhaps say the gold wasn't clean, or not very pure, to induce the



digger to sell it cheaper. There was a great competition among the storekeepers in buying gold, as they made immense profits by sending it to Europe; £2. 17s. being about the average price of gold on the diggings *at that time*, whereas they could get nearly £4 for it in England. Nearly every storekeeper had the price he gave posted up in a conspicuous position on the outside of his tent.

Now and then as one strolls along, a peep at the interior of some tent more blessed than ordinary, reveals quite a domestic scene, due to the presence of the digger's wife and family, with perhaps a favourite cat—a rare and precious animal on the diggings at the time I am speaking of, though common enough after an enterprising individual imported a dray-full from Melbourne, which he sold at a pound a head. Here comes the Chief Commissioner on horseback, in a kind of undress military uniform, and a mounted policeman or orderly riding at a respectful distance behind; the latter not dressed like his brethren in England, but in a very neat cavalry uniform,—a mistake, I think, as for many reasons it is undesirable for policemen to imagine themselves

soldiers, or for the public to regard them as such. The Commissioner is the chief personage on the diggings ; his horse picks his way delicately, as if duly aware of the honour he derives from conveying so important an official. This little scene has dwelt on my memory, as being the only bit of dignified importance that I came across on the diggings, where, as a rule, everything is in the "hail fellow well met" style.

Here and there, at very rare intervals, a garden of a few feet square formed round a tent, enriched with a few precious exotics, such as wallflowers or primroses, is suggestive of home ; or the cackling of hens reminds one that eggs are to be had at something like a guinea a dozen. Not seldom when passing a tent—of which the owners are absent—unsuspicious of danger, a dog of ferocious aspect, apparently like Goldsmith's traveller, dragging "a lengthening chain behind," darts forth from a harmless-looking barrel with a growl and bark that makes one anxious for the fate of one's heels.

All necessaries, except meat, were very dear. We used on state occasions to indulge in a loaf of bread, price six shillings ; but potatoes were

luxuries upon which none but successful diggers, or very extravagant people, dared to venture. The only luxury we had regularly was a plum-pudding—"duff" we called it—on Sundays, on which day also the diggers generally prolonged their slumbers. Linen was as dear to have washed as to buy, so that the majority were in the habit of throwing away their shirts, and buying new ones when they required a change. Personal cleanliness was quite out of the question, except in the rainy season, water being as scarce as it was bad; the creek—which was nearly dry in summer—being muddy from the constant gold washing all along its course. During the rainy season water was plentiful enough, the deserted holes being soon filled.

The population of Victoria, as I have said before, presents a marked contrast to that of England and Europe generally. As a rule, every man there is, may be, or expects soon to be, his own master; and the consciousness of this causes a spirit of independence to pervade the mass, collectively and individually; this feeling being more especially prevalent on the diggings. Here are no conventionalities; no touching of hats.

Men meet on apparently equal terms ; and he who enjoyed the standing of a gentleman in England becomes aware, on the diggings, that his wonted position in society is no longer recognized ; and the man, who in former days might have pulled your boots off, or served you respectfully behind a counter, shakes hands with you, and very likely hails you by a nickname, or by no name at all.

While we were on the Bendigo, a rush to the Ovens' diggings took place, distant about one hundred and fifty miles north. Half the population seemed to be on the move, and many parts of the Bendigo soon had quite a deserted appearance. My mates were affected by the mania, though I was strongly in favour of remaining where we were for the present. However, the majority prevailed ; and off we went, after selling one of our horses and buying a light cart with the proceeds. We travelled through a beautiful park-like country, the ground scattered over with a small purple flower, diffusing a delicious aromatic perfume. As we got further up the country the trees (iron bark) became of a very large growth, many of them six or seven feet in diameter.

One evening, after we had camped for the

night, our horse strayed, and we could find no trace of him. One of the party returned from the search with several brace of wild duck, and a beautiful specimen of the Australian bronze-winged pigeon. Three of us looked for the horse again in different directions after dinner, but with no success; one being left behind to guard the tent, make damper, and other culinary operations. We were rather in a fix, being far up the bush, with a cartload of goods, our horse strayed or stolen, and no prospect of getting another, since, owing to the Ovens rush, they had increased in value, so as to be quite beyond our means.

We had almost made up our minds to swag it to the Ovens, abandoning our tent, cart, and provisions,—for it was useless to think of selling anything, all passers-by being sufficiently burdened already with necessities,—when a man told us he had seen a horse, answering our description, some six miles back on the track to Bendigo; two of us went again to look after him, while I remained with the other to guard the tent. After sunset I lay down on a horse-rug before an enormous fire, that lighted up the trees to their topmost

twigs, and read the 'Arabian Nights,' which, with Shakspeare, and another small book or two, formed my travelling library. Late at night my mates returned with the missing horse, and we resumed our journey on the following morning.

We had great difficulty in getting our horse over a widish creek, the opposite bank of which was very steep. We were forced to unload, and got over our knees in mud shoving at the wheels; returning, when the empty cart had been got over, to carry the baggage across piecemeal. When we arrived at the Goulbourn—a broad, rapid stream—we found that the punt was broken down. Many parties of diggers had been waiting several days to cross over, and the provisions of some began to run short; a scarcity gladly taken due advantage of by those who had a superabundance. Impromptu stores were opened on the spot, and enormous profits realized. One fellow sold execrable rum at two shillings a nobbler, *i. e.* half a wine-glass. Those who had stores to sell seemed to be in no hurry about the mending of the ferry-boat. Two men and a horse were drowned while we were here; one of the men, who could not swim, fell into the river while

washing a shirt, and the other was drowned while endeavouring in a drunken state to swim his horse over. As meat was not to be got during this delay, we had to depend entirely on our guns, there being no sheep or cattle station near; parrots, cockatoos, wattle-birds,—nothing came amiss.

The mosquitos bullied us greatly, while near the Goulbourn. We found the smoke of dry cow-dung—an elegant bush remedy—burned at the door of the tent, in a great degree prevent the intrusion of these pests; but this was not many degrees better than the evil.

## CHAPTER VII.

## BUSH-LIFE.

Ox the Goulbourn I had a disagreement with one of the party, who wished to assume too much authority over the rest, on the ground of his superior colonial experience. This aggressive spirit of his had been the source of constant bickerings almost ever since leaving Melbourne; and, as the two others of the party yielded to him more than I cared to do, I made up my mind to leave them, and return alone to the Bendigo, which I had from the first been averse to quitting.

Before starting I sold my pistols, which were not very good ones, and which I thought would be more useful in the shape of nearly three times their value in money,—the price I was offered for them. I took with me a small quantity of flour, tea, sugar, and bacon; making my ~~way~~ *bag* up in two bundles,—my blankets hanging



over my shoulders behind, and a small waterproof knapsack in front, connected by straps over the shoulders,—by which division my burden was easier to bear than if it had been all at my back, like Christian's in the 'Pilgrim's Progress.'

I passed the first night after leaving the river Goulbourn by myself in the Bush. The weather was unusually hot, and the mosquitos were terribly annoying. As a protection against their attacks, I was obliged to cover myself, before trying to go to sleep, from head to foot in a thick horse-rug. I was nearly suffocated, for I could not leave even my nose bare with impunity, and I was in a fever from the heat. My enemies were legion; the very air seemed made of them; and I could not make furtive attempts to get a draught of fresher air than was to be had beneath the horse-rug, without inhaling them. Whenever I turned for relief from lying in one position, I could hear them buzzing in myriads from where they had settled on the rug, and in spite of all my precautions they would frequently find some undefended *point d'appui*, forcing me to throw the rug off in despair, and shake it frantically at them that they might not close in upon

me before I had time to wrap myself up afresh. Thanks to the mosquitos I did not feel in the least conscious of my lonely situation in the Bush that night—a night I shall never forget!—it seemed so long—like five or six rolled into one; and I certainly never descried the first signs of morning, with greater pleasure than when the mosquitos hied away, like evil spirits of the dark, and left me to slumber undisturbed. When I awoke the sun was high, and I felt almost done up; however, I put a good face on matters, and was rejoiced to find, about half a mile further on, a creek of deliciously cool, clear water, where I performed my ablutions, and breakfasted on “*devils on the coals*” and bacon. I had hardly commenced my day’s journey, before I nearly stumbled over a guana, an animal of the lizard kind, about two feet long. Presently, I came upon a strange-looking object, which at a little distance I took for a stump of a small tree, capped with an inverted tin dish, such as diggers use to wash out their gold in; but it turned out to be a man, who greeted me after the fashion of the Bush, with a “Good day, mate!” and, without further ceremony, rose and walked along with me. Like me,

he had—according to his own account—left his party, and had picked up the tin dish on the road, intending to return to work on the Bendigo; between which and the Goulbourn, I saw articles of various kinds that had been cast away on the road by overburdened diggers,—enough to stock a small store. I was not much prepossessed with my companion's appearance; he was not unlike a monkey, his face almost entirely covered with hair, and he did not look so clean as he might even under the circumstances. He stuck to me all day, and all my efforts to get quietly rid of him were futile; but in time I began to be reconciled to his company, especially as he saved me a great deal of trouble in finding water, in which he was an adept; and at last, when we camped for the night, and got sociable over our tobacco and tea, we agreed to work on the Bendigo together. This same evening I found an enormous red ant, more than an inch long, and armed with a most formidable pair of nippers, walking over me. I feared the nest might be near, and looked carefully for it, as it would have been no pleasant neighbourhood, but there were no other signs of one. There are a great many dif-

forest species of ant in Australia, amongst others the pis-ant, very diminutive—as its name implies—but troublesome in an inverse proportion to its size, spoiling all eatables by the peculiarly disagreeable smell and taste imparted by its body. There is also the sugar-ant, so named from its particular weakness for sweets. I have noticed likewise a winged ant, its wings being apparently mere ornamental appendages; no use whatever, that I could perceive, being made of them. It disengaged its body from them on the slightest provocation, and with little or no effort. I have sometimes caught one of these ants by the wings, when it invariably left them behind, proceeding on its way with seeming unconcern. The entrances to their nests, for which they select, decayed or fallen trees, are always scattered with countless wings. One of the most vindictive insects possible is a small black ant. I remember once sitting down unwittingly near a nest of these ants, and soon became aware of their proximity by quickly repeated nips all over my body, instantly followed by an intolerable though transient pain when the sting was inserted in the wound caused by the nippers. I literally tore off my clothes to get rid of my assailants.

Next day, noticing that the country around showed indications of gold, we sunk a hole, but only found a speck or two in it. While we were thus employed, greatly to my surprise, I descried the party I had left returning. They had gone thirty miles beyond the Goulbourn, but, the accounts of the Ovens becoming contradictory, they had waxed faint-hearted. After they had passed, we knocked off work for the day, and got our tea boiling for supper. While we were at supper a horseman came up, and inquired whether we had seen any stray bullocks; telling us at the same time that he had been riding after them all day, and was quite fagged. After the fashion of the Bush, we asked him to take a pannikin of tea with us, which he did readily.

We deserted our hole next day, and breakfasted at a roughly built Bush inn. The sight of cups and saucers, laid upon a tolerably clean tablecloth, seemed quite luxurious to me after the very primitive style I had been living in for the last few weeks. Before camping in the evening-rain began to fall, and we had great difficulty in getting a fire lighted, but at last we succeeded in making a regular bonfire, by which we lay,

rolled up in our blankets, through which the rain soon soaked; but, thanks to the fire, so far from being cold, I was in a profuse perspiration the whole night, and managed to sleep in spite of all drawbacks, infinitely preferring my situation to that when the mosquitos attacked me, though even now the insects would not let me off altogether, a large ant stinging me with such force that I awoke with a start and cry, as if I had been shot, much to the astonishment of my mate. We were sufficiently wet when the laughing jackass roused us, but the sun soon dried our clothes. I did not experience any ill effects from my *water-bed*, thanks to the fire, which kept up the animal heat. What I had been undergoing was not unlike the water-cure process, not very pleasant; anyhow, I fought against any rising feeling of discomfort, and did my best to fancy that the bare ground was only a rather hard sort of mattress; and such is the force of imagination, that I really believe I succeeded to some extent. When I recall how much I have been exposed to all weathers, and how often I have slept out of doors beneath the Southern Cross, my blankets glittering with heavy dew, I marvel much that I am

not a martyr to the "*rheumatis*." Like Nebuchadnezzar, my body was getting quite used to being "wet with the dews of heaven." I suppose my immunity from the natural consequences of such exposure is to be attributed to my practice of making a huge fire in damp or wet weather, before I lay down for the night, also to the general dryness of the Australian atmosphere.

I don't know whether it is the case in most forests, but in Australia I used frequently to hear the trees crashing to the ground after heavy rain; perhaps it may be because they are top-heavy,—the limbs of the gum-trees being large, out of proportion to their trunks. The leafless skeletons of trees thus fallen, with their huge, uncouth-looking limbs sprawling over the ground, often suggested to one's fancy all kinds of impossible antediluvian-like animals and reptiles. Perhaps in these solitudes of nature the imagination is more liable to be influenced by sights and sounds that would elsewhere be passed unnoticed. At any rate, I know it has happened to myself as well as to others, as if the birds of the bush were endowed with speech. For instance, when I have, perhaps, been thinking over some plan,

or deciding on some course of action; a parrot's cry has sounded like "No, you won't! No, you won't!" or when in a hurry to get any piece of work done, "Be quick!" "Be quick!" A charcoal burner, a new hand at the work, and consequently not very successful, used often jokingly to say that the birds cried "No more charcoal!" "No more charcoal!"

These bird-talkings used to remind me of the 'Arabian Nights.' I suppose most of the birds thus heard—being of the parrot tribe—had listened to our talking, and that of other dwellers in the Bush, and so were really learning to articulate; though, of course, imagination gives them credit for saying a great deal more than they really did.

A few miles from Bendigo we met an old fellow shepherding, who complained grievously of his hard lot, in being obliged, through inability for severer work, to lead sheep at thirty shillings a week and rations, though I thought he had far more reason to rejoice at being, for a man in his station, and very old, so comfortably invalided.

We came to a halt at the entrance to the "Long Gulley;" and where we halted, there we settled to begin work. As we had no tent, and



could not afford, and really did not care, to buy one, as the weather was fine, we got a large blanket, which we put up tent-wise; an excellent make-shift, no material keeping out heat or rain better. It was not a very commodious residence, but we could sit up and lie down in it, which was all we actually needed, as the dry season was coming on.

When we had bottomed our first hole at about twenty feet from the surface, we carried the washing stuff (that is, the soil a few inches thick, lying on what is called *the bottom* of pipe-clay) in large tin dishes upon our heads,—heavy work it was,—to the creek about two hundred yards off, but there was not gold enough in it to pay the washing; and we tried another hole, which turned out a little better.

Our manner of living was of the roughest, as we had determined to be at as little expense as possible till we had hit upon gold. Our meat we toasted in slices on forked sticks, or threw it on the ashes to cook itself—black-fellow fashion,—but afterwards we manufactured a gridiron out of a piece of old hoop-iron. Plates we had none, nor forks. Our culinary department consisted of one

large pot, two tin pannikins, two knives, and one large plated table-spoon,—the only respectable-looking article we possessed. This rough living did not affect my appetite in the least. We worked too hard, and were too well used now to roughing it, to be very squeamish. We were, I fear, gradually lapsing into barbarism; and I did not (I ought, I suppose, to confess it with shame) dislike the process.

Our style of life had certainly a degree of novelty and freshness to recommend it; it was utterly free from mere conventional restraints. My outer man was in keeping. My dress had lost all its gentleman-digger freshness, showing evident signs of hard work, and my beard was becoming of patriarchal length. We rose with the laughing jackass instead of the lark, and continued work till sunset, with short intervals for breakfast and dinner. How thoroughly I used to enjoy my evening pannikin of tea and a pipe of tobacco, and when I turned in for the night I did not in the least feel the want of anything more luxurious than a gumleaf-stuffed mattress or blanket tent. Such a magician is toil!

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The women on the diggings were not, as a rule,

of a very fascinating description, very many of them being of the lowest order of Irish. There was one Irish woman, the wife of a digger, who had a weakness for smoking short black clay pipes; and used, too frequently, to honour us with a visit, boring me with her slang talk, freely interspersed with oaths, as she sat on her own peculiar and appropriate perch, a blackened stump of a fallen tree. My attempts to put a stop to her visits failed, but she brought them to an end of her own accord, simultaneously with the disappearance of my only piece of plate—the aforementioned table-spoon. I thought her absence cheaply purchased by the loss.

As we could not get gold enough to pay expenses in the Long Gulley, though many in the same locality were doing very well indeed, we struck our tent, and went to another part of the Bendigo, where we sunk a hole eight feet square; the unusual size of which attracting attention, and causing people who happened to pass by to imagine that we were doing well, several diggers sunk holes all round us, but neither they nor we got anything for our labour. We sunk several more holes, but none of them were good for much,

except one three feet deep, from which we took about three ounces of gold.

I was taking an afternoon stroll one Sunday, when a man whom I had met several times before on my way to and from work, but had not spoken to, saluted me with a "Good day, mate!" and, after a short chat, asked me to take a "nobbler" with him. His hut was quite a snugger, though not larger than a good-sized ship's cabin, to which indeed it bore some resemblance, fitted up with shelves, a small table, and two or three chairs, etc.; every inch of room turned to account. He was evidently an educated man, though nobody would have guessed as much from his appearance, which was nearly as rough as mine. It was really refreshing to exchange ideas with a civilized being, after having for some time associated with a rough set of fellows.

Some days afterwards I met the same man at the Commissioner's tent, where I had gone to buy a digger's license, and rather to my surprise, he not only did not speak, but evidently eyed me with suspicion. Not liking mysteries, I spoke to him, and found out that, on the morning after I had been at his tent, he was disturbed by the

barking of his dog, and, turning out of bed, discovered that the place was surrounded by policemen, who arrested and took him to the Commissioners, where he was fined about fifty pounds for selling spirits without a license, as well as for keeping a little over two gallons of spirits (the quantity allowed by law to be kept by a private person) in his tent. There were only two persons, he said, whom he could suspect of informing against him, as only two had received any spirits from him that day, and I was one of them. He told me that I had hardly left his hut when a man dressed as a digger came and begged for a little rum, as his mate was very ill with dysentery. After some hesitation, he rather unwisely *sold* the man a bottle of whisky, in consideration of his mate's being ill. Most likely the fellow was a policeman in disguise, sent as a decoy, as the police were at that time very unprincipled in such matters; certainly enough so to avail themselves of any underhand means of obtaining the Government reward for the apprehension of unlicensed spirit-sellers. The fine was a great inconvenience to the poor fellow, as he was only just beginning to do well at digging.

I was very glad to have an opportunity of clearing myself from all suspicion of having abused his hospitality.

Not long after the above incident, I fell myself into the clutches of the police. I had left my work one morning to get breakfast ready, and was sitting by the fire, when a man came up from behind me, and, after bidding me "Good morning!" began lighting his pipe at the fire. When he had done this to his satisfaction, he asked for my gold-digger's license, rather to my surprise, as being in plain clothes I had no idea at first who my customer was. I was a little dismayed at not finding it in my pocket, but took it for granted that I must have left it in my knapsack, and on turning round to go to the tent I was startled by an apparition of policemen with bayonets, drawn up a few yards behind. They must have approached the spot where I was as stealthily as cats, otherwise I must have heard them. Unfortunately I could not discover the license anywhere, and was marched off to the Commissioner's camp to be fined.

As we passed through the diggings the police were very much chaffed by the diggers, amongst whom they and the gold-digger's license of thirty



shillings a month were very unpopular. Indeed, so strong was the general feeling against this license system, that it was the chief cause of the riots at Ballarat some years after, in which many diggers, and some of the police and soldiers, lost their lives,—a captain of the 40th regiment amongst the number. After capturing me the police resumed their hunt, but they did not succeed in taking any one else, as the diggers were already on the alert, and the unlicensed ones hiding in their holes. I noticed that a frequent practice when a digger was asked for his license was to fumble for it in his pocket, and pretend he had lost it; the delay thus caused giving the neighbouring diggers an opportunity of pouring a volley of chaff upon the police, till they had lost all patience, and were on the point of making the digger their prisoner, when the license would be all at once forthcoming, and the police, baulked of their prey, would depart under a roar of laughter and hooting. I should remark that the zeal of the police in their very unpopular duty was stimulated by the prospect of receiving a portion of the fines. On reaching the camp I was fined, besides losing half a day's work by the delay.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## PLACE-HUNTING.

SHORTLY after the events narrated in the last chapter, I got into rather a low state of health,—from overwork and sameness of diet; and, as we found but very little gold, our finances were soon at a low ebb. I found also that I was becoming unable to do my fair share of work, which made my mate grumble. I therefore determined to look out for some light employment on the diggings, but without success; indeed, it was unlikely any one would employ me when—from being unwell—I did not look worth my salt. I was therefore constrained, much against my will, to quit the Bendigo. My plan was to travel on foot towards Melbourne, where I was more likely to get the kind of employment I required than anywhere else. After laying in a stock of flour, tea, sugar, and bacon, which reduced my funds

from about one pound to six shillings, I started. I did not walk many miles a day, but the cessation from work did me much good, and the camping out did me no harm, as the weather was dry and warm. In spite of all hindrances, I managed to keep my spirits up well, and rather enjoyed the journey than otherwise. I used to halt for the night very early, about two hours before sunset, and with the aid of the few books that I always carried in my swag, my thoughts did not prey upon themselves, and I thus received strength and consolation from other minds. One evening though, I was in rather a gloomy state of mind, chiefly caused by being unwell, I expect ; and coming upon a dreary, waste-looking spot, with a few stunted trees, and scorched grass,—the track ahead leading up a bare, stony hill,—the spirit of the place seemed so much in unison with mine that I determined to camp there for the night. This gloominess, however, soon wore off ; and a party of Scotchmen shortly after camping a little way off, I went to them, and tried to fraternize,—asking them to let me camp with them for company's sake, but they refused ; and I felt so angry at their churlishness, that I had no

further wish for any society but my own. I made a cheerful fire—what company there is, by the way, in a good fire!—drank some tea, and lay down very contentedly on my rug, reading. I was *determined* to see a bright side to everything. The journey to Melbourne took about five days, one of which was Christmas Day, which I celebrated by illuminating the Bush with an extra big fire at night. A Christmas night to be remembered for its loneliness; though, in spite of this, I was in excellent spirits.

I arrived in Melbourne with exactly one shilling in my pocket, a pretty good specimen of an unsuccessful digger. I might have got work on the roads, on the way, but I felt quite unequal to any hard labour. And, I beg, indulgent reader, that you will not be shocked, at my talking so coolly about working on the roads; for I assure you, that in Victoria—judging by the numbers of educated men, and gentlemen by birth, I have seen thus employed there—it is quite a fashionable occupation: and the wages, at this time twelve and fourteen shillings a day, with a tent to dwell in, were not bad for the work done, which was by no means great; though

it looked hard work enough to me, as I passed by from the diggings.

As I walked through the streets of Melbourne I was pestered by Jews and other gold-buyers, (standing at their doors to tempt any passing diggers) unwittingly mocking my poverty, by assuring me in the most pressing manner, that they would give the highest price for my gold ; but this unintentional mockery certainly acted as a kind of balm to the consciousness that I was suffering from the complaint of "impecuniosity," which, I fancied must have been as visible as a leprosy to all the world.

I felt better on knowing that my soiled and travel-worn garments, so far from arguing poverty in the wearer, rather implied the contrary. Certainly there are occasions in this world, when "the next best thing to being well off, is to seem so."

The first thing I did in Melbourne was to get my things out of the place where I had stored them, sending all that I did not actually require to an auction room. I then took lodgings at an inn, where I proposed remaining a few days, till I had somewhat recovered strength.

I did not find mine host civil after the first day or two; no doubt he would have preferred my place being occupied by some lucky digger, who would have emptied his money into his pockets a little faster than I did. Unequalled prosperity had indeed at this time made hotel-keepers quite unbearable; they were only civil in proportion to the rate one drank their abominable compounds. It was quite a common thing then for improvident diggers to spend forty or fifty pounds at an inn in the course of a few days, thinking it the correct thing to make all who came to the house as drunk as themselves. I was told of a party of successful diggers stopping several days at a small Bush inn, and not only drinking to excess themselves, but stationing two men in the road, with orders to compel every passer-by to come in and drink, under the penalty of forfeiting their day's pay of ten shillings each, in case they allowed anybody to pass without stopping. The accommodation in the Melbourne inns was bad enough, but it was luxurious compared to that of the Bush inns on the diggings' route. I remember being driven once by stress of wea-

ther, to the dire necessity of taking shelter for the night in one of these dens of extortion, where the charge was three shillings for sleeping in the same bed with another man, a stranger; sheets, of course, there were none. A breakfast of pork or beef, both salt as brine, and bad tea without milk, was also charged three shillings. I did not escape the charge for the bed by sleeping on the floor, as I had no fancy for strange bed-fellows. The Bush inns, it is fair to say, are generally much better now, though they are yet bad enough as a rule.

I did all I could, as my health got better, to obtain some light employment, but was not very successful; probably, in part, because I sought it awkwardly, not like a *bonâ fide* working man; partly, also, because the first blind rush to the diggings was over, and people began to see the folly of leaving settled, and generally well-paid, occupations, for a mere speculation. Three months before, things were very different; then, good situations, Government and others, as I have said before, were going begging,—but now, to add to the other difficulties in my way, the town had just been filled to overflowing by the simultaneous

arrival of several shiploads of emigrants, many of them gentlemen by birth, or clerks, who had brought little or no means with them, or had squandered their all on the voyage out, and thus for a time at least were tied to the town by want of sufficient money to pay their way to the diggings, being as much in my way as I was in theirs. For several situations advertised in the 'Argus' newspaper, for which I applied, there were generally from ten to twenty applicants, I being doubtless amongst the least fitted for the duties required, as I possessed no business habits whatever.

After an unsuccessful application to take charge of a horse and dray,—to make my chance of obtaining which better I had donned working attire again, *i. e.* blue shirt and moleskins,—I saw in the 'Argus' that schoolmasters were required by the Denominational Board of Education, and to lose no time, I went at once to the office of the secretary without making any change in my dress. In an outer room of the office I found several anxious semi-clerical-looking men, in white ties—candidates for school situations—waiting examination. They scrutinized me wonderingly, as if



puzzled to know what business so rough-looking a character could have in such civilized society. The secretary, a very young-looking man, received me politely, not seeming to notice my rather inappropriate dress, for which I of course apologized. He told me that my application was too late to allow of my being examined that day, but that I should receive a written notice informing me when the next examination would take place ; but I could get no precise information as to when it would be held, except possibly in a few weeks. As I required immediate occupation, I gave up all idea of turning schoolmaster, though I sent in an application, not caring to leave a stone unturned, and about two months afterwards I had a letter from the secretary, saying, that an examination of candidates would take place in three weeks from that date ; though it appeared that they would even then only get schools as vacancies occurred, and not immediately after the examination, as the advertisement led me to believe. In this way I discovered that the "Circumlocution Office" is not confined to the other hemisphere.

One morning the following advertisement caught my eye :—"Three thousand labourers

and three hundred clerks are required immediately for the Geelong and Melbourne Railway. Application to be made to Mr. ——." Off I started, congratulating myself on the prospect, that out of so many situations I must get one, but my hopes were short-lived. I found the referee, a fat merchant, in no very amiable mood. He told me that the advertisement was a hoax, got up to annoy him, and that he had already been pestered by some dozens of applicants, some of whom had sworn at and abused him, as if he were answerable for their disappointment.

I made application for employment in several other quarters, but the only person who seemed at all anxious for my services was a superintendent of a sheep-station, stopping at the same inn with me, who wished to engage me as hut-keeper at thirty pounds a year and rations; but I was averse to burying myself in the Bush for such a pitiful remuneration while I had a shilling left. Shepherding and hut-keeping may do well enough for an old man, or a married couple with children; but for a young, single man, in tolerably good health, I cannot imagine a more uncongenial employment, in spite of all the pastorals that

were ever penned. It is a pleasant picture enough to see an old fellow, resting in the shade enjoying his pipe, with some two thousand sheep feeding near him, for the old man has no future, as far as this world is concerned, and his time has come for retrospection, and his rest has been earned probably by a life of labour ; but to see a young man, who has a long future before him, thus reclining, or crawling after a flock of sheep day after day, is not edifying.

At this time new arrivals in the colony, who happened to be hard up, were wont to dispose of their outfits on a spot near the wharf known as " Rag Fair," and great numbers availed themselves of the opportunity. Some of the immigrants used to spread their things out on stalls, trying to show off every article to the best advantage ; others, for whom this process was too tedious, or who were ashamed to act as salesmen, sold whole boxes of things at once to any one offering even a quarter of the price they were really worth. Of course the Jews, who are legion in Melbourne, did not miss so good an opportunity as " Rag Fair" presented. By setting up stalls there, passing themselves off for new ar-

rivals, and pretending to sell things at a great sacrifice, they managed to drive a good trade. The purpose for which the fair had been allowed by the town authorities, viz. of relieving poor emigrants by giving them an opportunity of raising a little money, was thus thwarted, as the Jews gradually usurped all the space allowed; and it became at last so detrimental to the regular retail trade of the place, in the opinion of the storekeepers, that they got up an agitation, and "Rag Fair" was put a stop to.

My health being restored, and my purse being nearly empty about the same time, it became expedient to quit my inn; and as there seemed to be no chance of getting any light occupation, it was necessary to bring my mind down to hard work, and with this purpose I shouldered my blankets,—without which working men never think of travelling in Australia,—and walked in the direction of Flemington, then a collection of a few houses, about two miles from Melbourne, where I knew some road-work was going on. Presently I came upon a man supposed to be at work, but who was really taking things in general very easily, his pipe occupying far more of his

attention than his pick. From him I learnt that wages were ten shillings a day,—tent, wood, and water found,—and that I could probably get work a mile further on. I did not altogether rejoice at the prospect of road-making, or “wielding the geological hammer,” as stone-breaking is sometimes politely termed in the colony, but there was no alternative; so as I approached the hut where the overseer lodged, I endeavoured to console myself by enlarging in my own mind upon the advantages of the occupation, remembering that even stone-breakers had excited the envy of a certain great and learned man from the relaxation he supposed their employment would afford to an overwrought brain. *My brain* certainly needed no such relaxation at that period of my life, as many of my friends will testify.

This overseer could not give me work, but referred me to another about half a mile further on, where I found the men at work, and the overseer near them, absorbed in a newspaper. He was quite willing to employ me, and, guessing probably that it was a style of work to which I was unaccustomed, he very civilly tried to encourage me by pointing out two or three men who,

according to their own account, were or had been highly respectable, viz., a barrister, a surgeon, and a mate of a ship. However successful they might have been in their former callings, they certainly were not very expert at their present occupation. The barrister was a small, middle-aged man ; his legs trembled as he struggled along with a small barrow-load of stones. The medical man's eyes were afflicted with blight ; and he wore blue spectacles, which did not give him a very workman-like appearance. He was seated near a heap of large stones, from which, at long intervals, he abstracted one ; and after regarding it curiously for some moments, as a geologist might a pet specimen, and coquetting with it a little, he would give it a gentle tap or two with his hammer, as if it went to his heart to break it. There was nothing remarkable about the mate, except that he seemed sore-footed, and generally disinclined to move about, and bore a suspiciously strong family likeness to that useful individual met with on board most ships, viz., " Jimmy Ducks,"—so called, as doubtless most of my readers are aware, because the poultry is under his especial charge. The two first-men-

tioned individuals had really been in the Law and Physic line. The other men were also taking things more or less easily, and the overseer evinced no disposition to drive them. One or two of the men had massive gold rings of colonial gold and workmanship on their fingers. Well, thought I, there might be a worse refuge for the destitute than the roads,—so to work, or whatever it was, I went. The overseer advised my living in the tents, but on inspection I found them so dirty and crowded, that I preferred lodging in a hut, near the scene of work, for which I paid thirty shillings a week; finding my own bedding, *i. e.* blankets, and sleeping on the floor of a small room, in which three other men slept in similar fashion. Water was so dear—thirty shillings for a one-horse load—that I had a dispute with the man who rented the cottage, about the quantity to be used for washing; he wishing to restrict me to something like a small teacup-full for this purpose.

From the heat and dusty nature of my work, the scarcity of water was a hardship inconceivable to those who have all their lives been used to consider it as abundant as the very air they

breathe. As the scene of my employment was the route to Bendigo, I was rather nervous lest any of my English acquaintances should by any chance see me, and alarm my friends at home by sending word that I had come down to road-making. Indeed, in a letter sent to England about this time, I told them I had met with Government employment at ten shillings a day; which was the truth.

Those were the golden days of road-making in Victoria for idle men, when a man might do as little as he chose, and still be rewarded with ten or twelve shillings a day; and, as the overseers were paid by the day also, they were not interested in hurrying on the work. The road-making system in Australia was at that time the greatest sham I ever knew. Several of the overseers had no knowledge whatever of their business, but generally managed to hit upon some man who had, and made him foreman. Such a state of things could not of course last, and the contract and piece-work system is now in vogue. I have known men make over a pound a day at piece-work.

After a little time I found my employment,



though easy, painfully monotonous, as may readily be supposed; and it was not altogether agreeable to stand in a heated atmosphere all day, half suffocated by clouds of dust from the numerous bullock and horse-drays, more especially when a hot wind was blowing, scorching as a blast from a not very distant furnace. I used to try to eke out the time by committing scraps of poetry to memory, chiefly "Burns," and saying them over to myself, as the conversation of my fellow-workmen was not always of an edifying nature. It would never have done for me to try to make the time pass quicker by working harder than the rest, as that would have been a rebuke to the overseer, as well as to the other men, and I should inevitably have "*got the sack*."

At this time, about a year since I left England, I got my first letters from home. I had been to the post-office just before starting for the diggings, and once afterwards; but such was the crowd, that I was not able to get near the pigeon-hole of a window, though I waited and struggled for above an hour, and had after all to retire letterless. Only those who know what it is to have

anxiously-expected news from a far country, within a few feet of them, and not to be able to get at it, can judge of my disappointment ; for I was certain there were letters for me, as I had seen them advertised in the ‘ Unclaimed Letter List.’ The letters which I ought to have got then I thus received nearly a year after they were written. The Post-Office arrangements in Victoria are now as good as they were then the reverse. Talking of Post-Office arrangements, I recollect while in Victoria receiving an official letter from the Circumlocution Office department of the London General Post-Office, informing me that a letter to my address had been detained there for insufficient postage, and would be forwarded to Melbourne on receipt of the sixpence due. Now, the news of the detention of this letter was at least three months coming out. The transmission of the money would have taken three more months, besides the *final* voyage of three months ere the letter at last reached me. Nine months’ delay altogether. Of course it was useless to send the money under the circumstances, as the news would by that time have been valueless. The extra sixpence might just

as well have been charged on my receipt of the letter.

I could not perceive that the good wages,—for they were very good in comparison with what labouring men get in England, in spite of the price of provisions,—had any very beneficial effect on the men in general, that is the unmarried ones ; but this was no doubt greatly owing to the discomfort in the tents where they were all huddled together, which drove them to the public-houses.

The flies at this season (summer) were most annoying, except during work, when the clouds of dust from passing drays put a stop to their attacks ; but at meals they fully made up for lost time, rendering any attempt at eating a duty rather than a pleasure. On the diggings they did not venture into the holes, though the mosquitos did in swarms during the night, and we had to dislodge them in the morning before going to work, by throwing earth down. It is a common custom in Victoria for working men, especially on the diggings, to wear small branches stuck round their hats, or sometimes gauze veils, as a protection against flies and dust. A swarthy digger or labourer, all over beard and moustache,

made rather a comical-looking veiled figure. I was also a good deal bothered by sand-flies, not bigger than a pin's head, which select the eyelids as their *point d'appui*, causing them to swell, so as often to bring on a temporary loss of sight. This affliction is called blight. After sunset, the mosquitos, flats and sharps, proclaim their presence most effectually. The bugs are monsters, very Anakims; and the fleas it is not possible to keep entirely out of a house, by any amount of washing and scrubbing. I have seen the ground alive with them in the Bush, on sandy soil, far away from any habitation. One effectual method of getting them out of blankets, is by spreading them near an ants' nest, the inhabitants of which will soon clear them of every trace of fleas, returning themselves to their nest about sunset.

It must not be supposed, however, that these insect plagues render life at all miserable for a longer period than is necessary to get used to them; and it is really wonderful how soon one learns to tolerate and even ignore their inevitable presence. In course of time my skin became as unconscious of mosquito and flea bites, as so much rhinoceros hide.

Though my readers will probably smile at such an assertion, still it is a fact, that even a stone-breaker's existence need not be without its share of romance, as the following story will show :— A young fellow, for lack of some more congenial employment, was content to pursue his "geological" researches on the road-side, and in that position was happy in attracting the attention of a pretty girl, the only child of her parents, who were very well to do. Of course, love suggested the means of communicating with the interesting looking young stone-breaker. Perhaps the young lady dropped her handkerchief, and his present humble occupation had not caused the youth to be so far forgetful of politeness as not to pick it up, and present it to his blushing admirer. At all events, they improved their acquaintance ; and she probably did not want excuses for taking her walks along that particular road. At last, to cut the story short, they took the shortest road to matrimony ; subsequently, no doubt, casting themselves, after the most approved fashion, at their parents' feet,—and I heard that they had at length been induced to look with indulgent eyes on their daughter's conduct.

## CHAPTER IX.

## UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS.

AFTER a few weeks' work my "occupation was gone;" that is, the particular piece of road upon which I was engaged was finished; and I was so entirely tired of the dusty monotony of road-work that I did not care to keep at it any longer, and betook myself to Melbourne, where I had seen by the papers mechanics of all kinds were in urgent request: not that I had any knowledge of mechanics, but I remarked that men who possessed but little practical knowledge of the various trades professed to be carpenters, painters, paper-hangers, etc., and even succeeded, after a fashion, in putting up rough wooden houses or huts, and papering or painting them sufficiently well to get handsomely paid for the work, bad as it was, skilled artisans being scarce. These men, thought I, have assumed and got on, why should not I

also put on a little assurance? I did so, and after a short search, found a newly erected house, of which I engaged to paint the outside. I was duly installed in my novel occupation; apron, paint-can, and brush, all complete. As I was perched upon a ladder, and the scene was the street, my position was tolerably conspicuous, and my work open to the criticism of the public; however, I tried to hold the brush as artistically as I could, and acquired confidence as the work advanced. I was, moreover, encouraged at times by sundry small boys crying, "My eyes! can't he paint, Jim? that's all;" and other remarks of a like encouraging nature. A momentary doubt certainly crossed my mind as to whether professed painters were in the habit of receiving such flattering unction of small praise from passers-by, but I would not give way to any doubt of the sort; and on casting my eyes upwards the colour seemed to be laid on most unexceptionably; but, on descending the ladder to refill the paint-pot, imagine my vexation at detecting a rivulet of paint flowing right across the footpath, having its source in my work. I had laid it on too thickly. My employer was luckily not at hand, so I quickly

covered up this unsatisfactory sign of the amount of skill I possessed as a painter, and resumed my work as if nothing had happened. At dinner-time he came to inspect my handiwork, and it suited me to take his silence for approval, though it must be owned I had some secret misgivings. Before evening I had so much improved, that I began to feel quite confident of being able to earn a living by painting, with nearly as much ease as any veteran of the brush. Whole streets of houses presented themselves to my hopeful imagination, as waiting for my beautifying touch ; but, alas ! in the midst of my mental jubilations, I inadvertently kicked over a bucketful of white paint. My employer was near ; but though evidently annoyed, said nothing, as he helped me to take it up ; and I deceived myself with the hope that the accident was a matter of little importance. All things considered, I was a little surprised—though I certainly had no reason to be—at being told that same evening, civilly enough, that my services would not be required next morning. So I received my day's pay and departed, slightly crest-fallen perhaps ; and thus began and ended my experience as a house-



painter. No doubt the proper "colonial" course to have taken would have been to go and offer my valuable services to several master-painters successively, gaining experience from each failure till I had perfected myself in the art at their expense; but I was not yet sufficiently colonized to have the requisite amount of assurance for such a course.

It was Saturday evening when I was discharged; and as my lodgings in Melbourne were somewhat expensive for a man out of work, I walked to Canvas Town,—an assemblage of tents, as the name implies,—situated opposite Melbourne, on the left bank of the river Yarra.

This encampment, in point of number of inhabitants, of whom there must have been some thousands, well deserved the name of town. It owed its origin to new arrivals having been permitted—during the first rush to the colony, at the time of the gold-fever—to pitch their tents there, and in a very short time it swelled to its then dimensions; but it has since been voted a nuisance, and done away with.

The inhabitants seemed even more closely packed together than in Melbourne itself, and

the accommodation I got was sufficiently uncomfortable; the proximity to my fellow-lodgers at night being closer than desirable. There were about twenty-five men sleeping in the same tent (a very large one) with me. Many of us made up our beds on boxes, which had been left in charge of the owner of the tent by his lodgers; not a very safe place, I should have thought, to store them in.

For sleeping in this den, wrapped up in my own blankets, I paid eighteenpence a night; but by this time I was getting quite careless about roughing it; at least I could plainly foresee that discomfort would probably be my lot for some time to come, and I met it half-way with cheerfulness, whereby the evil was robbed of the greater part of its terrors. It was rather amusing at night to hear my fellow-lodgers telling each other their experiences and adventures during the past day. Many of them, I thus found out, were, like myself, ignorant of any particular business or calling; and did not, from their own accounts, seem to have been generally much more successful.

Early one morning I reconnoitred the town

and wharf, where a great deal of loading and unloading vessels was of course going on. On board one I went up to a very dandified-looking officer, and asked him to give me work. Without seeming to hear my question he stared at me at first in a puzzled manner, as if he half recognized me, and then exclaimed—"Why, surely, it cannot be ——!"

I had, in fact, stumbled upon the second mate of the ship that brought me out to the colony. After a little talk about indifferent subjects, I repeated my request; but he only said, in reply, that he could not give me any work himself, and did not know where I should be able to get any: indeed, he did not seem in the least inclined to trouble himself about my concerns when he found that I was looking out for work, though he had seemed glad enough to see me at first, possibly taking me for a successful digger. I did not care about the man, but I was not a little annoyed at his indifference, because I had helped to get up a very considerable subscription for his benefit on board ship, coming out from England, which he knew. He had been wrecked during a voyage to America, and lost

everything ; and as the passengers saw that his kit was scanty in the extreme, many of them subscribed to enable him to replenish it.

It gives one a most undesirable insight into human nature, to find such lukewarmness in returning a real kindness. Every such instance tends seriously to diminish one's stock of philanthropy, and faith in human nature. The mere disappointment to one's well-founded expectations of help, in such a case, is the least part of the harm done.

At last, at the very end of the wharf, I boarded a lighter freighted with bricks. A person to whom I addressed myself, pointed to a man running, who he said was the skipper. I gave chase immediately. He ran fast, and I was afraid of losing sight of my chase, but my long legs befriended me. He was not over-civil at being pulled up, but on learning my errand his tone moderated at once, for he was in search of help to unload the lighter, but he could only give me one day's employment.

As I was returning that evening to Canvas Town, I met a respectable-looking man on the look-out for quarrymen. As we walked along

he became quite confidential, as 'is not unfrequently the case in the colonies with almost perfect strangers, telling me that he was a civil engineer, and had a short time since arrived in the colony with wife and children, that their means of living had been well-nigh exhausted while he was looking out for employment as an engineer; but luckily, at the eleventh hour, when he had made up his mind to seek work on the wharf, or anywhere, the superintendence of a Government stone quarry was offered him. He proposed to employ me there, and as I liked the man's looks I agreed to work under him. The situation of the quarry suited me well enough, as it was away from the dust and traffic of the roads. I worked for this man some weeks; he was very civil to me, but his drunken habits cost him his situation. At this time I lived in a tent of my own, which I had bought for about five pounds. A tent is certainly a comfortable habitation in Australia during the greater part of the year, and it can be kept comparatively free from insects, which houses cannot.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE FOREST.

BEING out of work, I had to look about me for some days, and at last another man and myself engaged ourselves as wood-cutters; an employment which was quite new to both of us. I had never had anything in the shape of an axe in my hands more formidable than a small tomahawk for chopping up small wood for my tent fire; and as I looked at my bright new American axe, I had some little doubt as to my power of wielding it effectively. In my inexperienced hands it seemed quite as likely that it would cut my shins as the trees, and, as I looked at the forest monarchs that were destined to fall beneath my blows, I felt rather puzzled as to how we were to bring them to the ground without danger to life or limb. Such were my cogitations as we jogged along in a dray towards the scene of our future

experiences. We had engaged to cut firewood at five shillings the one-horse load,—a price which would not have paid even an experienced wood-cutter in those dear times, as we afterwards found out; and what was unusual, our employer would not find us licenses, without which, no one is or was allowed to cut wood, or even reside more than two or three days on Crown lands.

We pitched the tent on a very pretty spot, a high bank, sloping down rather abruptly towards a narrow stream, which was shadowed by a sort of copse of young trees on the opposite side. I thoroughly enjoyed sitting at the door of the tent after the trouble of pitching it, and making things snug inside. The quiet evening hour, and the scene, alike induced castle-building. Now and then the bright plumage of a parrot would glance in beautiful relief against the background of dark foliage overhanging the water, the cypress-like sombreness of which was in capital contrast with the intense blue tint and appearance of depth in the sky, which is so very beautiful, but is seldom if ever seen except in tropical or semi-tropical climates. The ear also

shared in this passive enjoyment of nature. The notes of birds, strange and exotic, sounding to me even yet; the rippling of the little stream below, and the solemn music of the evening breeze, as it alternately swelled and died away through the deep forest, was altogether a kind of musical festival, that might have charmed with its freshness and breadth of expression even a frequenter of Exeter Hall oratorios. Of course I had been in scenes in Australia before, which in themselves were quite as enjoyable as the present; but I suppose the reason that the recollection of this evening has clung to me is that my own mind and state of feeling were,—as is the case with everybody at intervals, more or less rare,—in harmony with nature; so that I read this book of God, outspread for all, of whatever creed or clime, in some measure as it is intended to be read. Everybody must, I am sure, have experienced, at some time or other, that state of heart and mind which,—though it has been felt by all, can be described by few,—when man and the natural world react as it were upon each other, and seem in some mysterious manner to unite, even as body and soul are



united ; when the whole creation, including sun and moon, mountains and all hills, trees, cattle, and creeping things, with all fowl, with the heart and mind of man to crown the cup of praise, seems for the moment to be moved bodily nearer the Eternal Throne, bursting into a very Eden of all things that are in their various degrees beautiful.

. . . . .

My pipe and tea seemed like connecting links between the solitudes of nature and civilization,—on the debateable ground between which and a patriarchal, *semi*-civilized life, I seemed for a season to be placed. I have not quite made up my mind whether or not a wandering life in tents, *in a fine climate*, is the medium state in which most earthly happiness is to be met with. It is remarkable (I speak from experience) with how little *real* inconvenience one can dispense with most of the so-called necessities.

Early next morning my mate and I sallied forth to commence operations against the trees. I think we both felt a little nervous, but, like Don Quixote, we put a bold face upon the mat-

ter, and selected one of the biggest trees for our first attack. Instead of cutting away the trunk in the direction in which we wished the tree to fall, as a skilled wood-cutter would have done, we chopped away inconsiderately on opposite sides, till an ominous crack warned us to keep on the *qui vive*, and we withdrew to a safe distance, expecting to see our giant fall prostrate every instant; but as he showed no such intention "*we went in at him again, and let fly with such stoutness,*"—after the manner of Mr. Great-heart,—that the stubborn fellow replied at last with a few more and louder cracks and groans. "*Then we stood still to take wind.*" Once more we returned to the assault, and cut away to within an inch or two of the heart of the wood, the tree "*speaking,*"—as the loud cracks, before a tree falls beneath the axe, are called,—in a very alarming manner. Again we retreated, as it would have been madness to remain near the trunk any longer; for it was now cut away on all sides to that extent, that a puff of wind in any direction would have sent it down. At length the expected breath of wind did just stir the leaves; the tree gave a sort of convulsive shiver,

cracked loudly like a platoon of musketry, and finally creaking,—as the huge gates of Doubting Castle may be supposed to have done when opened by Giant Despair,—fell with a grand crash that reverberated in thundering echoes far and near, as if a dozen large trees were all tumbling down together, no doubt making the astonished opossums resident in its branches believe that the end of all things had come.

By watching other men at work, we soon learned to fell trees in a more scientific and safer manner, so as to make them fall pretty much in any direction we chose. We discovered also that running from under a tree, expected instantly to fall, was the surest way of meeting the danger we wished to avoid; so in future we kept close to the trunk, dodging round it as the tree was in the act of falling.

Finding that my mate was given to unlimited rum, I got rid of him, and went to work alone on my own account, removing the tent to another spot; and led the life of a hermit, though I worked hard. I carried my own provisions, fortnightly, upon my back, from a Bush store, about two miles off; cooked my own food, washed

my own shirts, and mended my own clothes. If ever a man felt independent, I did at this period, during which I had a pretty extensive experience of the conveniences and inconveniences of a Robinson Crusoe kind of life. Till the novelty wore off I liked it, and should have liked it better if I had had a Man Friday. After all, the liberty that is purchased by cutting off so many social ties,\* will not do for any length of time. It is only fit for gorillas or madmen.

A man must have a tolerably unburdened—or a supernaturally hardened—conscience, to endure, much less to enjoy, a solitude prolonged for any length of time; at least, such solitude as may be found in the Australian Bush. It is true that he is there surrounded by Nature in her sunniest aspect, perennial foliage, and bright skies; but it is in the silence of such scenes as this that the “still, small voice” is most eloquent. Such solitude is a sort of holy ground, where I should imagine none that are greatly burdened with sin dare remain alone for long; where man and his Maker speak as it were face to face, more than anywhere else, with Nature as one of the chief mediums of communication; where, in a manner,

"*the invisible things* of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" (Rom. i. 20).

Never till I thus began to live by myself in the Bush did I experience the vastness of solitude,—that shrinking up of oneself into such infinitesimal smallness that one began to realize that half-mad state of mind, which some men are said to have undergone, of disbelieving in one's own identity. I can readily believe that those great religious impostors, who have from time to time sprung up, have actually, after a prolonged solitude, *believed* in some of the visions and apparitions which they professed to have seen; and indeed we see by the Scriptures that *bonâ fide* inspired men, and our Lord Himself, practically owned the desirableness of not unfrequent retirement. Possibly it was a necessity for the Prophets to live much alone, in order to keep up that highly-wrought, intensified state of mind in which most of the Scripture prophecies appear to have been composed. And for myself, though I have never been in the habit of seeing visions, yet during my few weeks' comparative

solitude there were moments when I felt as it were on the confines of two worlds,—when everything around me seemed unreal and weird-like,—a condition to which I was occasionally subject for some little time after I had, for company's sake, moved my tent nearer to another man's. In fact, I think it highly probable that my brain would have been affected had I been alone much longer. I practically realized the Divine words, "It is not good for man to be alone," though not, at the time, in the sense intended in Genesis.

I used sometimes to fancy I heard voices calling me by name. Now and then I used to be startled by fancying that I heard my mother calling me; so plainly, that I almost expected to see her, though I knew that she was at the time some sixteen thousand miles distant; and on one occasion, on a Sunday afternoon, when I had just woke up from a half-dozing state, and was looking through the open entrance of the tent into the Bush beyond, two figures were before me just within the entrance,—a lady and a little girl,—well, but simply, dressed in white, and both very good-looking, in all senses of the word. They did

not speak, but it seemed to me as though they had come for me to accompany them to church. Their appearance was too pleasing to alarm me, though I knew that there were no women nearer than Melbourne, who could be by any means termed ladylike, as these figures undoubtedly were. When I first saw them I was, for the moment, sitting on the side of the bed; but, when I stood up, they were gone. Of course, it must have been some optical delusion; but anyhow it was a very pleasant one, and I don't care how many more I have of the same kind. I only mention it to show the state into which solitude brings some minds, mine among the number.

This solitude certainly had the beneficial effect, while it lasted, of impressing me, to some extent, with a conviction of my own littleness, to which I have before alluded; a conviction to which some wise and learned men have arrived by very different means. It was under the influence of this feeling that I put down the following thoughts on paper, and I think no apology is needed for inserting them here, as they were the natural growth of the circumstances in which I was placed, and bear out what I have said above

respecting my state of mind. No man is aware of his own utter ignorance, till he begins to have a growing conviction of *what is*, compared to what he knows and understands; and then, the awful sense of his own insufficiency threatens, like an avalanche, to smother and crush into non-entity that *atom* of immortality, the soul, until a man is tempted almost to doubt his own existence, and the reality of things around him, and to believe that himself is a dream within a dream.

All men must have felt, in a greater or less degree, at some moment of their lives, this self-condemning, withering sensation of littleness. The only real end and truth the greatest philosopher has ever attained to is the consciousness that the highest flights and deepest shafts of human wisdom but lay bare the pitiable vanity and mournful imperfections of man; that, in comparison with the immeasurable field of knowledge which expands before them, the idiot and the *savant* have made about equal progress.

But, in truth, this utter humiliation and prostration of the soul before the Infinite constitutes the greatest reward of the truly wise man; and is to him the *real end* of all earthly knowledge.



He then bows himself in ecstasy at the very threshold of heaven, and faithfully waits till the scales shall have dropped from his eyes, and he see clearly what he now believ'es, viz. that this life, except so far as it is a stepping-stone to something \*better, is at best but a midsummer night's dream.

## CHAPTER XI.

## FOREST SOCIETY.

ONE evening, just after sunset, I was returning to my tent, when I saw a group of dusky figures near it, making a great jabber. As I approached nearer, I saw that they were black fellows, armed with spears, etc.

They looked like so many hideous demons in the gloom of the forest, as the flickering light of the fire fell upon them ; but I felt little alarm, as I was too poor to be robbed to any great extent, and I had no great faith in what I had heard or read about the cannibal propensities of some of their tribes ; besides, any cannibal could have seen at a glance that my bones would afford but little satisfaction in the picking. They surrounded me as I came up, thrust their hideous faces close to mine, and half deafened me with their gibberish. As I went into my tent some of them

followed me in. This was a little too much, so I drove them out without ceremony, just to let them see I wasn't going to be humbugged.

They at last made me understand that they wanted rum and bread, and I offered them some damper, on condition that they would go at once. They seemed grateful, and soon left me in peace ; applying some term to me which I afterwards was told means " gentleman." The real Australian blacks are little less ugly than gorillas ; which, indeed, to my mind, they much more nearly resemble than white men, or the higher types of blacks. Some of the half-castes, however, are not so bad-looking. To do them justice, I missed nothing from my tent.

I fully believe, from the evidence I have seen of the constructive powers (small though they be) of the Australian blacks, that they are by no means irreclaimable savages ; though the few efforts that have as yet been made to civilize them have, I understand, utterly failed.

I had, with want of forethought, pitched my tent on a spot of ground from which there was no fall ; but there had been no rain for some time past, and I did not anticipate any yet : however,

it did come down one night, and to such purpose that on peeping out from my blankets in the morning I perceived "water, water, everywhere" all round my bed ; where, however, it only just covered the surface of the ground.

It did not seem advisable to get up, as the bed was likely to be the only dry, warm spot in that part of the Bush ; so I resolved to consider it my ark till the waters went down, or rendered the position untenable. Lighting a fire, or indeed quitting my bed at all, was out of the question ; but, happily for me, I was able to reach from it some cold tea and damper ; so I breakfasted, read the "Arabian Nights," and dozed till near sunset, the sound of the rain beating on the tent, and the water round the bed making, by comparison, my rather singular position one of no little comfort. *Half an hour or so before sunset, the rain having left off, I got up, and was rejoiced to find some smouldering embers in a hollow tree that I had set on fire. I soon made a cheerful blaze, dug a deepish trench round the tent to draw the water off, filled my frying-pan with glowing embers, and put it inside the tent, and by the time it was dark, and I had comforted*

myself with a pannikin of hot tea, the tent was tolerably dry and habitable. It was lucky for me that I was not in the habit of making up my bed on the ground, as some men do in the Bush ; and it may interest the reader to know what sort of a bedstead I had improvised. It was a very primitive affair ; merely a flour-sack split open, the sides being nailed to poles about six feet and a half long, the ends of which were placed horizontally upon four short forked sticks driven firmly into the ground. It was extremely comfortable, quite as much so as a hammock, which is saying a good deal. I had not been very long settled indoors when I heard a "cooe," (a peculiar cry of the blacks, imitated by colonists,) to which I replied in like manner ; and I felt so strong a desire to hear "the sweet music of speech" after such a dull day, that I eagerly invited the stranger in. Feeling brave in all the conscious innocence pertaining to a state of "impecuniosity," I feared no possible Bush-ranger, and I was fully reassured when a jolly round English face was thrust through the tent opening.

My new friend turned out to be a charcoal-burner, who had gone astray himself while looking

for a strayed horse. I saw at once that he was no common labourer, and a very little conversation showed that he was a man of education and a gentleman. The charcoal fire had, by this time, made the tent quite dry and comfortable; and by aid of a little hot punch and a pipe of tobacco, we, who five minutes before were unaware of each other's existence, became quite sociable, and almost as unreserved as old friends newly met after a long separation.

He had arrived in the colony a few weeks previously, and raised his tent in Canvas Town, where he remained till his hopes of getting some "*respectable*" employment in Melbourne or elsewhere had evaporated. He then bought a horse, trusting to Providence and his own industry to add a dray thereto, and turned all his energies to charcoal-burning, of which he knew nothing. He was not doing well when I first met him; but eventually, by unflinching perseverance, he managed, I believe, to make a good living by this employment. He had pitched his tent about half a mile from mine, and from this time few days passed without an interchange of visits. After my experience of solitude, I fully appreciated even this limited society.

A couple of American wood-cutters also settled themselves near, and I picked up some useful hints from them in wood-cutting. They were wonderfully expert with their axes, never making a false or unnecessary blow, tumbling a tree down almost while an ordinary wood-cutter would have been thinking where to strike the first blow. Their work was splitting posts and rails, which they cut from large trees with their axes, without any aid from cross-cut saw or wedges. I have seen really substantial huts built by them in a very short time, with no other tool than their axes.

I had by this time cut a good many loads of wood, and it became necessary to look out for customers. I had not much difficulty in finding them, and I managed to get rid of the wood I had cut; but unfortunately the ground over which my heaps of fuel were scattered was so treacherous, that, though the empty drays passed over it easily enough, they by no means fared so easily when loaded. Many a dray have I seen filled with my wood bogged up to the axle-trees, and obliged to be unloaded three or four times in less than a quarter of a mile. The consequence was, as might naturally be expected, that few custom-

ers who had once experienced the nature of the ground returned a second time to me for wood. I recollect one dray, which the efforts of two powerful horses, and several men, could not move from the place in which it had stuck, and they had at last to abandon it for the night, which caused a considerable loss, as they missed the Melbourne market for that day, at a time when fuel was selling at more than three pounds the one-horse load.

The havoc which even one man only can make in a very short time in the Bush, with his axe, is noticeable. The forest all round my tent—which at the time of my commencing wood-cutting, looked rather like a well-timbered English park—was now comparatively bare of timber and bleak-looking; indeed, Victoria will become an uninteresting-looking country when the characteristic beauty of its flat surface, its forest scenery, has been swept away; and this must be the case at no very distant date, if the wood continues to be cut down at the present rate, for it is not by any means a thickly timbered country, and its rapidly increasing population hardly burns any fuel but wood.



I had several times noticed a number of lines cut in the turf near where I was working, and I found out afterwards, that the Government surveyors had named and marked out a township there, streets and allotments all complete; and near the site of the future church—distinguished by a cross cut in the turf—I had pitched my tent: in fact, I had a whole embryo town to myself. Not a few of the towns, marked in some of the maps of Victoria, are of this description, not even boasting the inevitable blacksmith's forge and public-house combined with a general store, in which many unbuilt cities of the Bush rejoice.

The sale of Crown lands—always a subject of vital importance to the colonial public—now excited unusual agitation. An extract from a letter of mine, written about this time, on the subject, may possibly be interesting to some readers:—  
“If Governments would only throw open the Crown lands to the public, letting or selling them at a low rate, in such quantities as the capital of the buyer would enable him to cultivate, numbers of men with a little money would be retained in the colony, who now take their gold and industry to other countries where land

is cheap; and who would be in a position to offer immediate employment to hundreds who complain that they cannot get work on landing.

“The demand for, and supply of labour, would then increase together; and the worst of all gluts in the market, that of labour, would be avoided. The Colonial Government has the power of selling the cattle and sheep runs, if the public interest require such a course; but this would be contrary to the interest of the squatters, amongst about eight hundred of whom a large proportion of the Crown lands is leased. Many of them rent an extent of country as large as a good-sized English county, at ten pounds a year. The squatters can, and do, powerfully thwart those who wish to carry out any *popular* measures relating to the sale of Crown lands. There certainly are sales by *auction*, but the very nature of these scares small capitalists; and mere speculators have it all their own way. A change in the system is what the people justly demand, and must have, ere long.

“The large, floating population of Victoria is not an element of strength; but Government might make it so by doing all they can to sell the land cheap, to induce the people to settle. Almost

every ship that leaves the colony carries away what ought to constitute her bone and sinew, in the shape of men, who would gladly buy land and remain, if proper facilities were offered them of doing so. As it is, men get what gold they can at the diggings and then leave for America, or some other country.”\*

My acquaintance the charcoal-burner's work seemed to me far less pleasant than wood-cutting; for, though his work did not call for so much manual labour as mine, still he and his “*mate*” had to be continually on the watch, lest the fire smouldering in the kilns should burst out, and in a very short time destroy whole bushels of charcoal. One of them was generally obliged to be up at night, especially when there was any wind, which would frequently find out some uncovered crevice in the kilns, and blow the fire up like a furnace.

Often while they were attending to one kiln, two or three others would burst into flames, illuminating the Bush far and near; and then, indeed, all their efforts could not always prevent the de-

\* Since writing the above, there has, I believe, been some alteration for the better in the system of land sales.

struction of what had been a constant source of anxiety to them for weeks.

I was myself induced to add charcoal-burning to wood-cutting; but I soon learnt the fallacy of getting up at night to watch the kiln after a hard day's work, and remained in bed with great indifference when roused by the news that my kiln was in a blaze.

The method of making charcoal in Victoria,—and elsewhere too, for all I know,—is by covering over fallen trunks of trees with turf, leaving a small opening at one end for a fire, which is also closed up with turf when the wood is well alight.

One morning, when I was thinking about getting up, I heard a great bellowing, and a sound as of innumerable hoofs approaching. On looking out I saw some hundreds of cattle rushing madly towards my tent, and I felt some little alarm, as there seemed to be every probability of their coming straight through it. There were no trees sufficiently near for me to climb in time to get out of their way, so I retreated into the tent, hoping that the cattle would take it for something more solid than canvas, and conse-

quently avoid knocking their heads against it. On they came, like a troop of irregular cavalry, making the very ground tremble, and as they approached pretty close to the tent I felt very far from comfortable; however, just as I was expecting them to burst through the canvas, they separated into two streams and dashed along on either side, doing no further injury than shaking the tent by stumbling over the ropes that held it to the ground.

For some moments quite a river of confused noises was rushing by, as the earth trembled under the clatter of hoofs, and the air rang again with the bellowings of these "bulls of Basan that compassed me round about." They were followed by several stock-riders, shouting lustily, and making their terrible long-lashed stock-whips crack like rifles.

About this time I "furled my tent" again, and pitched it near the charcoal-burner's, under an acacia-tree, in the branches of which resided a pair of laughing jackasses, which roused me most effectually every morning at sunrise.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE CHURCH IN THE BUSH.

I USED to think more about my friends in England on a Sunday, than on any other day of the week. My thoughts, being freed from ordinary occupations, seemed naturally to fly homewards; and though no "church-going bell entreates the soul to pray" in the Bush, I often—in imagination, at least, about church-time—accompanied those I loved best to God's house, with holier and more subdued feelings than I fear I sometimes experienced when present with them *in the flesh*. But I shall not easily forget the effect the English Church Service had upon me, when I heard it again after a pretty long residence in the Bush. It seemed strange—almost like a dream—that the building and all its fittings, the congregation and service, should be so home-like at such a distance from home; that the English

Sunday should be so thoroughly reproduced (at least in church) at the Antipodes, and the whole scene so old-country like, rather than colonial.

I could hardly realize the fact that I was not in England, and almost expected to catch glimpses of "auld acquaintance" in the congregation as I recalled "auld lang syne" in the service. How purifying and soothing were those prayers, with every one of which associations of a happy past were linked!—and the chants and hymns, in which the organ and myself seemed like old friends, met in a far country to talk about old times.

And yet the very intensity of the pleasure which I felt in hearing the Church Services on this occasion, is an indirect proof of a great want in our colonies.

Things are not as they should be, when a colonist, on coming to Melbourne or any other town, is affected by the very strangeness of a service which was once so familiar to him, and which he welcomes as an old, long-lost friend.

Of course, churches in out-of-the-way districts in the Bush, where there probably are not twenty people within a circuit of some hundreds of

square miles, are out of the question; but if there are no places of worship where they may hear the Gospel preached, it is plain that the Gospel ought to be brought to them.

The fact is, that there is a population in Australia, which, from the mere hardships and difficulties it has had to overcome, is very intelligent, though careless and ignorant to a degree, in religious matters; a ground ready prepared for Mormonites and Spiritualists to sow their dangerous doctrines. Surely such a population needs missionary work quite as much as, or even more, if possible, than absolute heathens. To "colonial heathen," as well as to "home heathen," the words of Dr. W. C. Magee, when speaking of the latter, may be applied. "To these heathens," says he, "the Gospel must be *brought*, and brought to their very doors, and pressed upon their acceptance: they will not seek it; the demand for religion, unhappily, unlike that for other things men want, is in inverse ratio to the supply. Those who need it most will always seek it least." "He that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd."



What the state of religion is in the Bush itself can be well imagined from the fact,—which I had on good authority,—that not very many years ago, in a small town about forty miles from Melbourne, when an oath was required to be taken, the whole place was searched through before a Bible could be found. It is true that there are clergymen and Scripture-readers here and there in the more populous parts of the Bush, maintained in some instances by the voluntary subscriptions of squatters and others, but these cases are very few indeed. In all my experiences in the *actual Bush*, I only met with one clergyman of the Church of England and one Scripture-reader.

The former I never saw among the men at the station where I was, during the sheep-shearing season, when he might—if he had his heart at all in his work—have probably influenced some of them for good; as out of some thirty men from all parts of the colony, there must have been some who would have given him a hearing.

The Scripture-reader came into a hut where I was stopping for the night, on a journey through the Bush; but he was “chaffed” to such an extent

that he was obliged to retreat, though not without having made an effort to obtain a hearing ; bñt the fault was partly his own, as he was young, and inexperienced in dealing with the people he was thrown amongst, and moreover wanting in tact and address.

The people are very independent ; so that any one going out as a missionary to them should be prepared to find a very different class of people from those he has been accustomed to deal with at home. People who at home would pull their hair most respectfully to a clergyman, on finding themselves in Australia, where they are so much more their own masters, consider themselves as pretty nearly his and everybody else's equals. He would have his own way to make among them, and at first would, in most cases, be almost sure to meet with scorn and impertinence.

But I feel sure there *are* clergymen and others at home, who are peculiarly fitted to deal with such characters, and to act as pioneers of the Gospel in the Bush, and on the diggings ; for, as I before remarked, the majority of people in both are fast relapsing into utter indifference about religion : and even if many of them are not actually

heathens, or worse, they at least need the Gospel to be brought home to them again.

There are men at home who long for a *wider* field of duty than a country or even town parish presents. Their physical and mental energies are with difficulty restrained within such comparatively narrow limits. At all events, they feel that they are fitted for a totally different sphere of work, and that where they are they are not the right men in the right place. And who can tell but that these promptings and desires, in many cases, spring from quite another source than mere restlessness and desire of change; that they are Divine calls from that God who has not fitted them as He has other men, with equal zeal but different gifts, for more confined but not less important duties in England?

There are many men of considerable physical strength and energy in and out of the Alpine Club, to whom tracking their way through vast forests and over desert plains, to say nothing of swimming a river now and then, would be a welcome excitement—would satisfy a want of their natures, which limited means, or the nature of their duties in England would not allow them to

gratify nearer home ; while at the same time they would feel happy in the consciousness that the paths which their natural bent, and their duty as ministers of Christ pointed out, were one and the same.

If such men wait till colonists in the Bush and on the diggings call aloud for spiritual aid on a larger scale than has been supplied hitherto, they will probably have to wait for ever. They would not willingly contribute to the support of ministers till the vital importance of their mission had been brought home to their consciences.

It will, of course, then, be inferred that *at the outset*, missionaries to these colonial heathen ought to have some little means of their own to support them, till those to whom they had so disinterestedly ministered in spiritual matters, should of their own accord come cheerfully forward to supply their earthly wants ; and, if their funds ran short before this result came about, the missionaries might very well labour with head *or hands* sufficiently to supply their necessities, for it will be well always to bear in mind, that labour of all kinds, even to breaking stones, is universally looked upon as honourable in Australia. *Nobody*

sinks in the consideration of others there, by bending himself to *any kind* of honest labour. But common sense and conscience would suggest to them the importance of ever keeping in mind that this labour ought only to be for the supply of their *actual necessities*, and no longer; for otherwise they would not only be justly suspected of partly, if not wholly, having been actuated by secular motives in assuming the guise of missionaries, but they would themselves soon forget in secular pursuits the one great object for which they had come out to those whose *spiritual necessities at least* had cried out, "Come over and help us!"

I feel however convinced, that if they *were* driven to the necessity of working with their hands, they would not have to do so long, if they were careful to conduct themselves so that the singleness and pureness of their motives might be above all rational suspicion. Men would gradually become convinced of the importance of their spiritual work, and would for very shame's sake, if not from higher motives, contribute a debt justly due to their wants.

From what I have observed myself, I should

say that the style of men required for missionary work in the colonies, as indeed for all such work, are men of considerable physical and mental powers; men who would not mind "roughing it;" the more educated the better,—above all, men of undying zeal, tact, and a high-souled courage, which a due sense of the importance of their calling would alone supply.

In fact, a whole army of missionaries is required not only amongst the actual heathen, but all over our colonies; and I cannot help thinking that Government would in the end find it a farsighted policy to give every facility in sending out any volunteers in the service of Christ. Nothing would tend so much to keep our scattered empire well together as the community of religious interests, which would thus be fostered by the Government and people alike of this country. What holier, and therefore stronger tie, could there be? In such a case, what is true of *the individual* is true of *the mass*, and I can only say for myself, a mere unit certainly, that my heart especially warmed towards the old country and all belonging to it, when I had the opportunity of attending the service of the Eng-

lish Church, to which I have alluded above, at Melbourne.

It would be a comparatively easy thing to rescue the colonists from the ignorance of Christianity into which they are relapsing, or have already fallen, before they have increased to a population of many millions, when the task would present herculean difficulties. The good seed can now be sown without much difficulty, in something like a due proportion to their spiritual wants; and the duty fitted to their strength, of seeing that the supply of spiritual aid increased for the future in due ratio to the increase of the population, would rest with the descendants of the present colonists.

What may be the state of Christianity in Australia in future ages, if preventive steps are not soon taken, may very well be inferred from what *is* the present state of religion in America.\*

According to the deductions of Dr. W. C. Magee, from the statistics supplied by the census of 1850, there were in the United States, in the year 1855, out of a population of about twenty-

\* See 'Magee on the Voluntary System,' p. 60. Bell and Daldy, London.

seven millions, no less than 5,120,000 open and avowed infidels.

Besides these infidels there were at least six millions who could not properly be called Christians, amongst whom were 650,000 spiritualists and 500,000 universalists.

In the same pamphlet by Dr. Magee, is a quotation from the Annual Report of the American Tract Society, 1859, which would apply equally well to many parts of Australia. "In many places where a few Christians have located, there is a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the Word of the Lord. In these wastes, ignorance, vice, and infidelity prevail; and that great multitudes of these souls will be eternally lost unless some outgoing, aggressive, personal, persevering effort be made to reach them, is too sadly true to admit of a question. Not less true, nor less sad is the fact, that many *might* hear the Gospel who utterly neglect it, and who will never hear it unless it is *carried* to them, and urged upon them." I might make many other quotations from the same pamphlet, but these will suit my purpose sufficiently, which is to show the urgent necessity there is of



taking immediate steps to prevent our colonies from falling into such a state of ignorance on religious subjects as will, in the course of a few years, render them fallow ground where the evil one may sow his tares without opposition, through the instrumentality of sectarians, and religious impostors of all kinds.

I have myself personally experienced the tendency to sink, as it were, unconsciously into a state of heathenish carelessness about religion, in the Bush ; which must always be more or less the case with the generality of people when, as there, there is comparatively no regular public worship or preaching, to keep the truths of the Gospel before people's eyes from one age to another.

As for private religion independently of attending public worship, every minister of the Gospel of any experience must have noticed in his parochial visits to people who habitually neglect their church or chapel, their ignorance of the contents of their Bible, which is especially manifested in sickness by their utter indifference as to the portion read to them ; and even when the absence from public worship is compulsory, as in the Bush, there is the like tendency to neglect

religion in private, as must always be the case naturally with us whose "clay will sink the spark immortal," unless the Christian truths are continually being kept before us by others than ourselves. I speak from *my own personal experience* and observation; and I feel convinced that other agencies are required to evangelize the world than Bible Societies and colporteurs, important as they are as subsidiary means.

No! the spiritual necessities of our colonies, as I said before, as well as of the heathen, cry aloud for a whole army of missionaries. Some people may perhaps say that the above remarks are out of place in a book like this; but I do not see it myself, for the scenes described in it are those in which this great want is chiefly experienced; and besides, the remarks were suggested by the recollection of the state of mind I was in at church in Melbourne, and may therefore be said to have quite a legitimate place in these pages.

## CHAPTER XIII.

“ He that fights and runs away,  
 May live to fight another day.”

FROM my own experience, I do not think even the closest friends are so unhappy in their separation as might be expected, for even the best amongst us have faults and failings that are disagreeably evident during the familiarity of daily intercourse, spots and blemishes that fade and dissolve away as distance increases. Love acts as a fan on our recollection of the absent, winnowing away the chaff till nothing but the golden grain is left. For myself, I know that when I had been a few years in the colony, the recollection of home and its associations, though not less precious than formerly, began, as it were, to lose its *reality*. My colonial way of life had become a second nature, and I could hardly fancy I had been accustomed to any other; so that I could not think of the past without falling into a

kind of pleasant dream-land—a likely soil to cherish any poetry that happened to be in one's nature. And so it naturally turned out that one day I found myself versifying ; and as a friend once told me that he had actually seen worse verses in the poets' corner of a country newspaper, I feel emboldened to insert them here ; and if other verses appear occasionally in these pages, I think the fact that they were suggested by the circumstances in which I found myself in Australia, will go a good way towards excusing their insertion.

## DREAM-LAND.

Now silent evening gilds the West,  
 And daily tasks and toils are o'er ;  
 The wearied exile seeks his rest,  
 His spirit seeks her native shore ;  
 And Fancy, poised on wings of gold,  
 With power free and uncontrolled,  
     Turns darkness into day.

'Tis morning in the land of dreams ;  
 Bright summer dews refresh the ground ;  
 The early sun with grateful beams  
 Sheds warmth and gladness all around ;  
 The feathered race their voices raise,  
 And add their mite of tuneful praise  
     To Nature's silent song.

The gard'ner whets his gleaming scythe  
 And mows with care the sparkling lawn,

And children raise their voices blithe,  
And fresh as gales that usher dawn.  
Flowers their varied tints display,  
And kiss with perfumed lips the ray  
That warm'd them into birth.

And well-remember'd forms are seen  
By Fancy's eye to gather there ;  
And voices that long lost have been  
Charm once again the exile's ear.  
Time cannot sap affection's spring,  
Nor wholly wear away the sting  
That parting leaves behind.

The soul pursues her trackless tour  
Through all the cherished scenes of old ;  
In well-known walks and nooks obscure,  
Sweet visions of the Past unfold.  
Things once familiar to the sight  
Are shadows fixed in memory's light,  
For home is dream-land now.

The winter season was now nearly over ; and the demand for firewood lessening, it became necessary to look out for some other employment ; so I shouldered my "swag," and went further up the Bush. On nearing a farmhouse, I met a man who said he thought he could procure me employment, and asked me into his house to dinner, where a fellow, who turned out to be his son-in-law, offered to employ me in splitting posts and rails, which I assured him I knew

nothing about ; but he persisted, and at last I consented to become a learner at one pound a week and my board. My employer was very expert at the work, and could tell almost at a glance whether a tree would split straight and easily or not ; but if he had any doubt, he would chip off a small piece of the bark, by the grain of which he could divine correctly whether the tree would prove too tough a customer. Most of the trees we felled were what are commonly called "*Peppermint gum*" trees, from the taste of the leaves, which have a slight flavour of peppermint. Directly we had felled a tree, we used to strip the bark off ; as, in case of our delaying to do so at once, it soon became too dry to be got off at all ; but, if taken in time, it is easy, by aid of an axe, to peel off the jacket of a large tree in a few minutes,—almost in one piece. We then cross-cut the tree into lengths of about ten feet, and it was surprising with what ease these logs could sometimes be split into halves with one or two good strokes upon the wedges with the maul. Once or twice, however, we were deceived by a tough tree, that defied our utmost efforts to split it, when we had to abandon it, and perhaps an

iron wedge or so in its grasp. My employer was a Roman Catholic,—a sensible, and pretty well-read man, who, in the breath-taking intervals of our cross-cut saw exercise, was fond of bringing on an argument about our respective creeds; and when, as is not unusual in such disputes, we were getting rather too excited, one of us used to pull hastily at the Catholic or Protestant end of the saw, and to labour we went again, our little argumentative ill-humours being soon worked off. I cannot help thinking the same course might be pursued\*with advantage sometimes by more ambitious disputants; for it is remarkable how mental, as well as physical ill-humours of all kinds, evaporate under the influence of bodily exercise.

I lived with my employer in a large tent, close to the house of his father-in-law, whose history was rather characteristic of the colony. He left England with a wife and family of grown-up daughters, just in time to reach Victoria at the height of the gold-digging mania. What little money he had with him on landing he gave his wife; and, having found employment for his daughters, he started for Bendigo with a shilling

in his pocket, with which he bought a small loaf of bread. By the time he had reached the Bush Inn, about half-way to the diggings, his loaf was wellnigh eaten; but there, as he knew something about horses, he found employment as ostler at five pounds a week, and he received so much money besides from travellers, that he made altogether as much as twenty pounds a week for six months, when, his gains decreasing, he joined his family at Melbourne, and buying a small piece of land started a dairy, and was doing famously when I first met him about two years after his first leaving Melbourne, a penniless adventurer, for the diggings, which, providentially for him perhaps, he never reached.

“ Providence shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will.”

I did not remain long at this place, as the work was far too hard for the wages; and, as I had become tolerably proficient, I did not care to throw my labour away. I had heard a good account of Geelong, and determined to go there. On the same day that I left, a marriage was about to take place between one of my employer's sisters-in-law, a pretty looking girl, and a man on the farm, quite a young fellow.



Just before sunrise, I noticed the bridegroom elect helping to kill and cut up a bullock ; and from anything in his manner one might have imagined that he was going to his day's work as usual, when "the dark east was brightening to his bridal morn." It is wonderful how little sentiment some people have !

I found several letters and newspapers from England waiting for me at the Melbourne Post-office, which I read and re-read, as people are wont to do under such circumstances, on the deck of the Geelong steamer ; and the time passed so quickly while I was thus employed, that when Geelong hove in sight, I could hardly realize the fact that the distance between it and Melbourne was some forty miles.

The town has rather a fine appearance from Corio Bay, being situated on high ground, sloping down to the beach. The bay abounds in sharks, so that it is necessary to have the bathing place surrounded by a sort of fence, through which I suppose the sharks regard the bathers, as hungry boys do the contents of a pastry-cook's window. In spite, however, of the favourable reports of Geelong, I was not able to get employment very readily.

I knew a man—a gentleman by birth—at Geelong, in a like predicament about this time, who was so hard pushed for something to do, that he went into a Labour-office, where the proprietor read out a list of vacancies, but none seemed suitable. The proprietor, however, urged the advantages of a cook's place at an inn, telling him that he would do very well there if he could cook a beef-steak or make a plum-pudding, which indeed was the utmost that he could pretend to do. The wages,—three pounds a week, board and lodging,—were not bad. After a few minutes' consideration, my friend agreed to give the place a trial. He confessed that he certainly had a few misgivings with regard to his fitness for the place, as he wended his way towards the inn; so much so, that at times he had almost made up his mind to turn back, especially when he found that the inn was a much more important-looking affair than he had been led to suppose, and situated in a rather central position; but as he had gone too far in the matter to retreat with honour, he endeavoured to delude himself into the idea that, after all, a cooking inspiration might descend upon him as it had

upon other *chefs de cuisine*, which would possibly enable him to rival Soyer himself; and having thus worked himself up into a state of self-assurance and faith in his own latent powers, he boldly entered the bar, and presented himself to the landlord as the new cook, ready to dish up anything in the most approved style. The landlord appeared to be duly impressed, and even asked this new-found treasure of a cook to join him in a friendly glass. Not so his wife, however, to whom my friend was then introduced. She put one or two questions to him, but his repeated assurances that he would undertake to cook anything, from roast elephant to baked opossum, seemed to make less impression on her than on her husband; and the manner in which she assured him, more than once, that some friends were coming next week who were *very particular* about cooking, implied a lack of confidence which my friend secretly resented as almost unjust; for he had worked himself up into such a state of faith in his improvisatore powers in the cooking line, that he actually felt equal to anything. The fact is, that he had, in his colonial experiences, so often found himself in novel

situations, the difficulties of which he had generally managed to overcome by a brazen assurance which, though it was not habitual to him, he was able to call up on occasions, that he saw no reason why the same assurance should not stand him in like good stead now. In this frame of mind he withdrew to his domain, the kitchen,—the waiter, a Frenchman, going with him to point out the cupboards and other dependencies. Presently, a smart housemaid came in with a brace of wild ducks to be roasted for dinner; but not content with delivering the birds, she lingered about in the kitchen, much to my friend's annoyance; for though his assured self-confidence was such that he would have undertaken the roasting of a rattlesnake, if necessary, still he knew very well that his *manner* of procedure with the defunct duck would not bear the test of prying eyes. At last, she took herself off; and then, as a preparatory step, he began to chop up the stuffing; but he had hardly begun when the housemaid, under some pretext or other, returned again; and no sooner had she gone than the French waiter came in with a message, and, instead of departing with the answer, remained,

evidently to watch. The new cook naturally felt indignant that the sacred mysteries of the kitchen should be thus open to vulgar eyes, so he told the Frenchman that as the kitchen was small he wanted all the room to himself, but the fellow evinced no intention of going. The preliminary operation of preparing the stuffing would not last for ever, and the waiter was evidently remaining to see the next move. Had the ducks required plucking, the evil moment might have been put off a little, as the waiter could have had no reasonable pretext for idling in the kitchen any longer; but there was nothing left to be done but prepare the birds at once for the spit, and cookee felt convinced that the waiter was sufficiently versed in cookery to see at once, from his manner of handling the birds, whether he understood the minutiae of his business; and no sooner had he begun upon the birds themselves than the waiter interfered. What cook could stand this? A *chef*, who trusted to the inspiration which is common to the higher walks of all art, to be interfered with by a vulgar, matter-of-fact waiter, with his nasty French ideas! With an indignant sense of injury he ejected him very

summarily from the kitchen, with an injunction to go back to France and eat frogs.

No sooner was the man turned out than the inspiration left my friend, and he regarded his position as any other ordinary mortal with average common sense would have done under like circumstances. It was useless to make any further attempts, for the Frenchman was evidently a spy, and was even then probably employed in effectually undermining the character of the new cook ; so the latter, taking everything into consideration, resolved to beat a speedy retreat. Devoutly hoping that he might not stumble upon the landlady, he sought the landlord at once in the bar, and told him honestly how matters stood. As it happened, the landlord was far too much amused by the whole thing to be angry ; and probably rather admiring the impudence of the man than otherwise, asked him to take a parting glass, besides paying him half a day’s wages.

So began and ended my friend’s experiences as a cook.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## PERSEVERANCE.

WHEN I had been a few days at Geelong I got work at the wharf, shifting timber from a ship there, at ten shillings a day ; but this only lasted for a very short time. I then had a turn as brick-maker's labourer, almost the hardest work I think I ever had anything to do with. Working up a great mass of wet clay with a spade into a consistence proper for brick-making is anything but a pleasant exercise under an Australian sun. My employer, quite a young man, who had just set up business for himself, could only afford one labourer, and certainly got all the work he could out of him. He worked with great energy himself, and was not contented with a mere fair day's work, but expected me to attend to the burning of his bricks at night, without any additional payment ; and in fact,

like the old fellow in the "Arabian Nights," manifested so decided an intention of making me do the work of a horse till I dropped, that I soon found it expedient to seize the earliest opportunity of dropping his acquaintance.

Dame Fortune certainly seemed to take an especial delight in kicking me about like a football. No sooner did I begin to feel a little settled in any employment than off I went again.

How far this *moving* scene was attributable to my own disposition, is not for me to say ; but no doubt a man's character in some degree influences his destiny, and what he is apt politely to put down to the account of chance, would frequently with more justice be put down to his own. However this may have been in my case, I tried, with tolerable success, to keep up a cheerful philosophy. To have given way to feelings of despondency, because everything I undertook seemed to lead to nothing, would have been positively suicidal. I did my best to act on my conviction, that no state could be so bad as not to be capable of being rendered worse by desponding. In whatever degree I might have to "come down," I was de-



terminated not "to give up." My life just about this time reminds me of a passage in "Eöthen," in which the author describes his feelings during a journey across the desert between Egypt and Palestine. I forget his exact words, but the sum of them is, I believe, that seated on his camel, with nothing to divert his gaze from the dazzling sky above and burning sand below, he would have been painfully affected by the glaring monotony of the scene, had it not been for the fountain of thought within himself. So it would have been with me about this time in the desert of my colonial life which I was crossing, had it not been for the—I will not be so ambitious as to say fountains—the diminutive rills of thought that occasionally made that desert blossom.

Though I was undergoing some real hardships at this period, I was anything but unhappy. I have often been astonished at the power of adaptation to circumstances that has been mercifully implanted in human nature. Here I was, leading a style of life—far from kith and kin—quite as a matter of course, which a few years ago I could not have conceived it possible for me to endure. Really, looking back upon my own

life, when I hear people over-fearful about their future earthly prospects, I feel almost inclined to laugh. No storm of adversity, whether self-invoked or not, is the worse for being boldly and calmly encountered; and indeed, if met in this spirit, it is wonderful how frequently the clouds that looked so black and threatening at a distance, in contrast to the bright sunlight and blue sky, seem to lose that intense blackness as they approach and gradually overspread the heavens. We become acclimatized, as it were, when they overshadow us; and as our prospects change, so a corresponding change in general takes place in our own natures. Tempests at sea have not a tenth part of the terror for a seafaring man that they possess for one who has only seen them from land; and in like manner what is commonly called adversity or hardship often ceases to be so as we become accustomed to it. It is only a new phase of life to which we become adapted, differing chiefly in this respect from a corresponding change in the opposite direction, viz. that whereas the majority are improved and refined by adversity,—that is not, of course, absolutely crushing, which it hardly ever is in itself,—very, very few minds

can bear the test of increased worldly prosperity without deteriorating.

The merry bee, in summer hour,  
With gleeful haste and happy skill,  
Draws only sweets from every flower,  
*He* has no bitter cup to fill;  
But Providence with rare design  
Has chequered every man's career,  
That earth-born views might not confine  
The soul, that owns no resting here;  
That we may learn 'tis Heaven brings  
Comfort, though all from us be riven;  
That trials rightly used are wings  
That waft the soul towards Heaven.

But to return to my story. The next scene in the diorama of my life was digging a deepish trench along a high road. The pay was not bad, eight shillings a rod; and one or two regular labourers could make nearly two pounds a day at that rate. I, however, not being used to the kind of work, could not make more than a living. I kept at this work till the hay harvest began, when I engaged myself as haymaker in the Barabool Hills, near Geelong. Most of the workmen there were "old hands," and I soon perceived that they managed to throw the harder work, with the tacit consent of the overseer, upon those who were green enough to allow it. The

most laborious part, when the loads come in quick succession—as they did at this time—is pitching the hay from the cart on to the rick. This duty always devolved upon another fellow and myself, while the light labour of spreading the hay on the rick was done very much at their ease by about double the number of men that were necessary. I spoke to my fellow-workman, and we agreed to rebel. Accordingly, we refused to unload the carts unless the others took their turn at it.

The farmer, who was looking on at the time, waxed very wroth at this, threatening legal pains and penalties if we did not continue to unload; and when he discovered that this course would not do, he tried bullying, which succeeded no better, while we blew up his wrath to furnace-heat by chaffing him in a very cool and polite manner,—a style of retaliation he was probably hardly prepared for from men in working garb. Neither party would give in, so of course we had to leave.

After another short bout at the Geelong wharf, which I found very convenient when out of regular work, I engaged myself as a quarryman

on the Barabool Hills. While there, the most violent storm I ever witnessed took place.

A bank of lurid clouds rose swiftly from the sea, the effect of their blackness heightened by the bright blue of the sky and water. As these clouds scaled the heavens with low mutterings like distant artillery, the bright face of Nature was also changed into an expression of gloom; though as yet the deep calm below was in strange and ominous contrast with the higher atmosphere, where a number of small clouds, like skirmishers thrown out from the advancing mass of blackness, were hurrying and whirling about in all directions. Below not a leaf stirred, except when every now and then a low moaning breeze sighed chillily over the land. We kept at work near the top of the hill till the last moment, thinking that possibly the storm would pass over, though there was every appearance of something unusual happening. When we did make a run for it downhill, there was no chance of escaping the first burst of the tempest, which was preceded by heavy puffs of wind cold as from some distant ice-cone. As we emerged from a narrow gorge in the hill, we heard a roaring sound behind us,

and on looking back saw a huge black pyramid of dust whirling after us so rapidly, that it was useless to run any further. We endeavoured to shelter ourselves by getting near a haystack, and there awaited the onset, which was truly terrific. I am quite unable to give an adequate idea of the impression made upon my mind by the appearance of the whirlwind, as it swept by. We were luckily on its skirts, though even there the wind was so powerful that we crouched down as close to the ground as possible. It came down the hill rapidly, but heavily, as if it would grind the very road to powder, and so black from the dust it had collected on its course that one could well imagine that some mighty, destroying spirit occupied the centre of the storm, guiding it straight along the road; an idea heightened by the gloomy atmosphere, dark as at a total eclipse of the sun, as well as by the loud bellowings of thunder, the vivid lightning, and hailstones as big as marbles. I confess my heart quaked somewhat within me, though I shivered from cold rather than awe, for the wind was as icy as it was strong. The scene helped me in a degree to realize that grand picture, all the more terrible from its very indistinctness,

in the eighteenth Psalm, which I cannot refrain from quoting :—

“Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because He was wroth. There went up a smoke out of His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also and came down, and darkness was under His feet. And He rode upon a cherub and did fly; yea, He did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness His secret place; His pavilion round about Him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that was before Him, His thick clouds passed, hail-stones, and coals of fire. Yea, He sent out His arrows, and scattered them; and He shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.”

The haystack afforded us little or no shelter, and rocked so under the influence of the storm, that we deemed it prudent to get upon the open ground. The stack was quickly unthatched, and half of its contents blown away in a few seconds. A barn also, some little distance off, was being speedily unthatched, layer after layer, as neatly as if done by some invisible hand. Violent and

destructive as the storm was all along its course, its fury was but momentary. A few minutes after it had commenced, everything was bright and peaceful again.

“How calm, how beautiful comes on  
The stilly hour when storms are gone,  
And warring winds have died away,  
And clouds beneath the glancing ray  
Melt off, and leave the land and sea  
Sleeping in bright tranquillity.”

MOORE.

As we walked homewards, the effects were evident in several prostrate trees, torn up by the roots. The north wall of a substantial, stone-built chapel had been blown down ; and a little further on, a couple of cottages were become ruinous heaps. By this time I began to be anxious about the house in which I lodged ; but as it was strongly built of stone, and of only one story, I had hopes of its existence. It had not, however, fared much better than the others, for the iron roof had been carried clean away out of sight. When we had put up a tarpaulin, by way of a makeshift for a roof, we went out to see what had become of the iron one, of which we found fragments rolled up, like sheets of paper, a quarter of a mile distant.



The further course of the whirlwind was marked by more or less ruin. A church at Geelong had been partially destroyed, some drays blown into the river, and a horse drowned. These sudden storms are not infrequent in Victoria; and as they usually come from one quarter,—the North, I think,—people, who are aware of the fact, sometimes build the walls of their houses of double thickness towards that quarter; but in one instance I know of, even this precaution did not save it from being blown down.

There is a saying in Australia, that a man must be washed out of his home, blown out, and burnt out, before he can make his fortune there. Certainly, what with bush fires, and occasional storms of something like tropical violence, a man is not unlikely to meet with all three calamities. Destructive as the storm I have attempted to describe above was, “it’s an ill wind that blows nobody any good,” and I was fortunate in obtaining several days’ work, at fifteen shillings a day, for clearing away the rubbish of the chapel.

Dust whirlwinds—that is, whirlwinds of only sufficient force to draw up the finest dust—were

more common on the Barabool Hills than in any other part of Victoria I have visited. I have seen three or four in sight at once, moving about in different directions. Some of them seemed to be several hundred yards high. Their form was spiral. They are beautiful objects; the dust which they draw up being so fine that their appearance is very light and airy, especially when the sun shines full upon them.

One of them played me a very shabby trick at dinner time, coming up from behind, unperceived, and filling my plate with dust. They recalled to my mind the pictures I have seen of the pillar of cloud that preceded the Israelites in the desert.

Lodging in the same house with me were a man and wife, whose history may amuse the reader. The husband, according to his own account, had been a lieutenant in the Russian army, and certainly he had the appearance and manners of a gentleman. He had landed in the colony with a few hundred pounds, which he spent in living at a first-rate hotel while looking out for some gentlemanly employment, which he did not succeed in getting; though, in the meanwhile, he was imprudent enough to take to himself a wife,

as unfit, if possible, for anything like a rough, colonial life, as himself. He must, however, have been a very sanguine man, for he continued, like the illustrious Micawber, to hope something worthy of his expectations would turn up, till the honeymoon and his last pound terminated together, and he and his wife were constrained to quit their extravagant style of living. He took refuge in stone-breaking, and it was while he was in this capacity that I became acquainted with him.

One wet night, when we were all snug in our blankets, (sheets are myths out of Melbourne and the larger towns,) the landlord became aware of a series of timid raps on the door, on opening which, in walked Mr. and Mrs. —, in a bewildered manner, quite unaware that they had stumbled by chance upon the right house, where, indeed, they had been expected early in the day. The landlord was not in the best humour at being roused from his slumbers, but the poor people were in such a sorry plight that it was hardly possible to be uncivil to them; and besides, their appearance suggested such a comical sense of unfitness for the stony occupation upon

which they were to depend for a livelihood, that the difficulty was to keep from laughing outright.

The husband was not bigger than many a boy of thirteen, and very slight ; so that it was hard to see how he was to knock a living out of the stones even for himself, much less for his wife too. It seemed probable, that if he would not be able to say, with Shakspeare's Prince Arthur, "My uncle's in these stones," he might be tempted to exclaim that *somebody else* was.

The wife was tall, slight, and very pale and delicate-looking, dressed in a whitish Indian muslin, fashionably cut, and a white sun-bonnet ; altogether, rather ghost-like. Her dress had a draggled appearance, as well it might, considering that they had lost their way, got benighted, and wandered into stone quarries, ditches, and other abominations. Her shoes were too fragile for anything but a town pavement in fine weather ; and, if I remember rightly, she had lost one of them, the other having stuck in some "slough of despond." Such persons cannot be called the "right people in the right places" in Australia.

The wife's custom was to sit on a sofa, making futile attempts at sewing, while her husband made

equally futile attempts to rap their bread and cheese out of the stones; the result of which was, that after a few weeks they had to leave the place, greatly in arrears for board and lodging. The last I heard of them was, that they had both been turned away from a sheep station—whither he had gone in the capacity of shepherd—as incorrigibly useless. I felt really very sorry for them, though I could hardly look at them without laughing, such “impossible” kind of people were they for Australia.

The soil of the Barabool Hills is well suited to the vine; the wine sent thence to the Paris Exhibition was highly spoken of. Cartloads of grapes used daily to pass the spot where I was at work. We generally stopped one of the carts and bought a few bunches, and most refreshing they were in the hot weather. Under the influence of the recollection of one of these refreshing pauses in our toil, I composed the following verses. In the third verse I should inform the reader that I took a poetical liberty, for the vines don't usually “*incline*” their branches in Australia; they are kept short and stumpy, which gives the vineyards a very uninteresting, busi-

ness-like appearance. The allusion to despotism in the last stanza is owing to the fact that a visit from a Russian squadron was thought in Victoria to be a not unlikely occurrence. It was about this time, I think, that Melbourne was frightened out of its propriety by a cannonade from a ship entering the Bay, which turned out to be the "Great Britain," celebrating something or somebody by a *feu de joie*.

## AUSTRALIA.

There is a land, a sunny land,  
Where summer most prevails,  
Whose scorching heats are gently fanned  
By cool sea-nurtured gales.

There, icy winter's but a name,  
The autumnal leaf unknown,  
And o'er her plains his blast of fame  
Fierce War has never blown.

The fruitful vine, in open air,  
Its purpling bough inclines,  
No glass nor artificial care  
The ripening heat confines.

There birds are clothed in richest plume,  
That Fancy's self could bring ;  
So bright, their colours might be bloom  
Brushed from an angel's wing.

There, gold, a blessing or a curse,  
In glittering piles is found,

And rougher metals thence disperse  
Their useful riches round.

There, wanderers from colder shores,  
By frowning Fortune driven,  
May find contentment 'midst the stores  
By bounteous Nature given.

Fair emblem of a better shore,  
Whose gales have borne no sigh,  
May Freedom's light for ever pour  
Throughout her sunny sky!

Should despotism's grasping hand  
Her regions e'er invade.  
Then, men, be worthy of your land  
That calls you to her aid.

While at work in the Barabool Hills I used sometimes to fancy that I heard the notes of the skylark, which indeed it was; for I afterwards found out that a few of these birds, that had survived a voyage from England, had been let loose in the neighbourhood. It was of course very pleasing to hear a voice so closely associated with the summer days of old England.

My employer having finished his contract, I was again on the look-out for something to do. At length I met with employment, and after a turn at lime-burning and a little further experience in brick-making, I once more settled down to wood-cutting; of my life at which I need not

weary the reader with any further account. As the weather was cold and wet, I built a turf chimney against one end of the tent, in which I used to keep a roaring fire in the evenings. As a further protection against damp and cold, I lined the tent with blankets, which is also an excellent protection from heat. Altogether, I was quite as comfortable as I could have been in the general run of colonial houses. I used to carry my week's provisions myself, from a store about four miles off. By dint of hard labour, some books, and such society as one or two neighbouring wood-cutters afforded, I was not troubled by *ennui*.

Zimmerman's 'Solitude' came into my hands now, but I was less interested in it than I should probably have been had I been leading a less solitary life at the time. My experience of solitude was too practical for me to care to read about its uses. Besides, I have come to the conclusion that—

“Not wholly in the busy world, nor quite  
Beyond it, blooms the garden that I love.”



## CHAPTER XV.

## FISHING.—SHEEP-WASHING.—CHRISTMAS.

WHEN the cold season was nearly over, and firewood had fallen in price, I again had to look for other employment; and hearing one day at dinner that some fishermen in Corio Bay wanted a mate, I sought them out, and engaged to join them. I repaired at once to their tent on the beach, which was a flimsy calico affair. The party consisted of four persons, including myself; two-thirds of the profits to be divided among three of us,—who did all the work,—the remainder going to the owner of the boat and nets, the sleeping partner, who professed to look after the tent in our absence, and to have our food ready on our return from our fishing excursions,—all which things he did not do, his whole time being divided between drinking and sleeping. This individual was generally styled

on the beach " Captain," on the strength of a report, the truth of which was dubious, that he had once commanded a ship.

The weather being wet and unsettled, our occupation, carried on chiefly at night, was not altogether enviable. It seemed rather against nature, to have to begin work at a time when most people were about to settle themselves at home for the night ; and hauling in long, heavy nets, at such an unseasonable hour, often up to our middle in water, was no joke, especially as with all our toil we made only a bare living. I wonder now we were not afraid of the sharks, but strangely enough I don't think we ever gave them a thought, though small ones could have come quite near enough in water three or four feet deep to do us no little hurt. If the night turned out unfavourable, we used often to come home, and turn in for a nap, getting up again in an hour or so. Imagine, ye " who live at home at ease," turning out of your warm beds in the middle of the night to put on wet clothes, and wade about in the sea for your living.

As morning dawned, the various fishing boats in the bay might be seen making their way for

the Geelong pier, to deposit their scaly burdens ; and, when people on shore began to think about quitting their beds, we used to seek ours, having previously, weary as we were, prepared our own breakfasts, which our worthy captain was generally too idle or drunk to do. Fish were so scarce at this period, that a tolerable haul of them, a few weeks previously, had sold for sixty pounds.

The marketable fish we most commonly caught were pike, and flat-heads, both good eating, the former not in the least like its namesake in England, in flavour or shape ; but I think we netted more sharks—very small ones—and dog-fish, than anything else.

On one occasion when we were hauling in, the purse of the net dragged very heavily along the bottom, as though a large piece of rock had by some means got into it ; and we were not a little astonished, when a great, slimy-looking creature crawled out of the net, and began to move with a sliding motion along the beach. Whatever might have been its appearance by day, by moonlight it was a disgusting object, which my companions—experienced fishermen in various parts of the world—recoiled from as it approached

them. As far as I could judge by the uncertain light, its colour was dark brown, or black, without any shell, the body round, and about two feet in diameter, having long straggling legs, like a tarantula, with which the creature *pulled* itself along, for they were evidently not strong enough to enable it to lift its body from the ground. I wanted to have it preserved till morning, but the others would have nothing to do with it, beyond stoning it out of all shape. When I went to the spot in the morning, the tide had washed all traces of the animal away. Had it been any well-known creature, my companions could hardly have helped recognizing it, since, as I said before, they were experienced fishermen. I never saw a print or description of anything like it, and have often regretted that it was not preserved.

The sunrises and sunsets are frequently exquisitely beautiful in Australia. One morning I witnessed a sunrise of more than usual beauty, which, as I happened to be in a frame of mind to appreciate it, left a strong impression on my mind.

Not a ripple roughened the sea as it lay like a young giant asleep, in powerful repose, under a

thin veil of gauze-like mist ; which, with the rose-coloured hue upon its surface, reflected from some fleecy clouds, made the whole scene like a very dream of morning, a morning which imparted a sense of its own heavenlike freshness and youthfulness to one's mind,—as if the poor old sin-stained world suddenly remembered that it had once been Paradise, and was indulging in a vision of its lost innocence.

High in the East the quivering light  
Ascends, and paler wanes the night,  
Who now, with all her starry train,  
Quickly resigns her ebony reign.  
Soon blushing dawn heralds the way  
For the young bright-eyed god of day,—  
Turning to gold the shadows dun  
That float above the unrisen sun.  
Reflected, with the clouds on high,  
The colours of the ocean vie,  
As if from heavenly roses blown  
\* Some wind the redd'ning leaves had strewn.  
Conscious of day, the birds awake,  
And from their wings the fresh dew shake ;  
At first in timid notes they tune  
Their morn-inspired throats, but soon  
The warbled tide of music grows ;  
Silence with harmony o'erflows ;  
Each tangled copse, each lordly tree,  
Conceals a feathered minstrelsy,  
And flowers that close at eve to sleep,  
Now from their fragrant couches peep,

And breathe upon the genial air  
The scents they dearly love to share  
With dew-cheeked Morn, ere the hot day  
Has kissed her, blushing, quite away.

My life as a fisherman was altogether unprofitable; the only decent day's work I got while so employed was going after a boat which had been blown out of the bay in a storm, for the recovery of which the owner had offered a fair reward. My companions, too, were such undesirable people to be with, that I was glad of an opportunity to leave them, and engaged myself as a sheep-washer up the Bush. On the way, I called at a tent on the road-side, to ask for a drink of water, and to make inquiries about the route. The occupants, a man and his wife, not only gave me all the information I required, but, with true Bush hospitality, pressed me to join them at their dinner. I reached the station, which was large and well kept, about sunset. In the men's hut there were about twenty intending sheep-washers at supper, mostly very rough-looking fellows, some of whom scanned me closely as I entered. I did not like the looks of them, on the whole; but to appear at home as much as possible I began to fill a pipe of to-

bacco, talking at the same time to the cook ; and when I had established an acquaintance with that important personage, I began to smoke, an occupation that afforded a pretext for remaining comparatively silent, while I watched and listened to the talk of my future companions.

A man should never, in my opinion, whether he smokes or not, travel without a pipe and tobacco in his pocket in the Bush, where inns are scarce, expensive, and generally extremely uncomfortable ; for a pipe is a most convenient letter of introduction, no settler being churlish enough to refuse a traveller a light ; and, if the latter possess any address, he will hardly fail, while cutting up his tobacco, to draw forth an invitation to tea and damper, or shelter, if necessary, for the night. Tobacco, too, sometimes runs short among the shepherds ; and any traveller having a stick of it at his disposal, may count upon a hearty, though rough welcome. Hospitality in the Bush, as elsewhere, is greater or less according to the population or number of travellers. At an unusually out of the way sheep-station, or farm-house, a stranger may make sure of a warm welcome ; for, though the occupants cannot exactly be said

to "never hear the sweet music of speech," still they are so well used to the sound of their own voices, that a strange voice is a treat to them. On the diggings' route, if you call at any neighbouring station you will have to pay for what you want, and probably get very scant civility into the bargain.

Our first work on the station was to prepare yards on the river's bank for the sheep about to be washed; and large beams of timber were floated into the water, and planks laid across them for the sheep-washers to stand upon. The sheep were thrown, a dozen at a time, from a platform raised about eight feet from the water, into the first of a series of small square pens, formed in the water by the floating timbers, where there was just room for them to swim round and round, as the washers standing on the planks dabbed the wool about with long crutches made for the purpose. When the sheep had undergone a preparatory cleansing in the first pen, they were passed, by placing the crutch on their necks, and ducking their heads under the dividing beam, into the next pen, and so on from one pen to another; till, pretty well ex-



hausted, they were passed into the last division, called the "Race," from which they scrambled out on to the opposite bank, though, to some of them, the river proved a very Styx. The washed sheep presented a most refreshing contrast to the unclean multitude on the other shore, and reminded me of the imagery in 'Solomon's Song,' "Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep that go up from the washing." We used to wash about fifteen hundred sheep in a day, the whole number on the station being about sixty thousand. The sheep-washing was altogether an extremely picturesque scene.

The shearing was carried on in a well-built shed, about ninety feet long, and proportionably wide and high. The shearers who had lately left Europe, I noticed, did their work in a far neater way than the colonial shearers, whose chief object seemed to be to get it finished as quickly as possible, without caring, in their haste, about cutting the poor sheep. An experienced colonial shearer could clear as much as a pound a day.

I was told that when a snake appears amongst a flock of sheep, those nearest form a circle round him, with their heads towards the centre,

where they contrive to keep him, by shifting their position as the unwelcome intruder approaches the circumference.

From my own experience, I consider it very desirable that any man going out to the colonies should be, more or less, skilled in the noble art of self-defence. Though I believe I am decidedly pacifically disposed, still, in pure self-defence, I found myself drawn into one or two encounters at this period.

Jokes of the roughest description were constantly played. At first I tried to keep apart from the worst characters as much as possible, but such an inoffensive course only provoked aggression, causing them to imagine that I assumed a superiority over them; so I changed my tactics, mixed with them, and returned their rough jokes after their own fashion, by which course I am confident that I saved myself an infinitude of bullying. On one occasion a fellow was helping me to fill a water-cart from the river, and upset a bucketful over me. As I knew enough of the man's character to be sure that he had done it purposely, I gave him such a ducking that he did not attempt to play any practical joke

upon me again. I also found it convenient to adopt a certain rudeness of manner. The polite "if you please" and "thank you" style only provoked ridicule and incivility. As with nations, so it is with individuals, an appearance even of readiness for war tends to preserve peace. Rosalind's policy was perhaps wiser than Celia's under the circumstances, for occasions will sometimes occur when it is better to "have a swashing and martial outside," than to go "in poor and mean attire."

One evening, while we were at supper, a poor fellow was carried into the men's hut upon a hurdle, and placed on the floor. He had been run over and much crushed by a dray, and there he remained groaning, in the midst of card-playing, quarrelling, and swearing. I certainly thought our employer might at least have had him placed on a bed in a quieter spot. One or two of the better-disposed men, however, robbed themselves to supply him with bedding. He was sent to Geelong the next day to the hospital.

On leaving the station, I returned to Geelong. It was near Christmas time, which is kept up in Australia in quite John Bull fashion, with hot

roast beef and plum-pudding, in spite of its being the hottest season of the year,—almost tropical. But the idea of any Christmas jollity apart from one's friends and relations and family gatherings,—with which in the English mind it is so intimately associated,—seemed to me somewhat melancholy. On the night of Christmas eve I had troubled and confused dreams about home, but I was awakened towards morning in a rather singular, though pleasing way, considering that I was in a strange land, so bare of all old-world associations. I dreamed that I was standing within a beautiful ruined abbey church, such as one meets with in England, when a deliciously soft strain of music breathed through the place; and as it became louder and more sustained, the delicate window tracery, and ivy-clad arches were lighted up as though by a bright moonlight, and the whole building seemed gradually to be losing its ruinous character and to be growing up in all the beauty of its restored proportions with the increasing harmony and light, when, the music beginning to die away, the light decreased, and the building vanished, leaving me standing for a moment on a bare spot of

ground, deeply impressed and soothed by the beauty of the dream. The music had not quite died away, and I lay in that transition state between sleeping and waking, enjoying it, till by degrees I awoke, and found that the music of my dream had its origin in a very indifferent band that was ushering in the Christmas morning ;—so softened had all harshness of sound become, ere it reached my ear, through the atmosphere of sleep.

I am of course perfectly well aware that I lay myself open to ridicule for detailing my dream, but I am equally sure that there are those who will appreciate the beauty of it. It was a source of pleasure to me at the time, and since, just as the sight and recollection of a beautiful picture might be.

The impression it made upon me was all the stronger because of its contrast to my hard-working life, and the bran-new appearance of everything around me, so little likely to call up visions of abbey churches, ruined or otherwise.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## VARIETIES.

THOUGH Australia, on the whole justly, is considered the working man's Paradise, I sometimes had to look out sharply to get employment. There were latterly, not unfrequently, plenty of competitors, far better qualified than myself, for almost every kind of hard work,—men from England and other parts of the world, who had worked hard all their lives. I laboured, too, under the disadvantage of not *looking like* a working man, and those who did were often preferred before me.

I began, too, to get tired of a wandering, unsettled life, though as yet I had relished it, in spite of its attendant hardships; but the charm of novelty was beginning to depart, and in order to get employment of a more settled character, I sent the only introduction I ever made use of, to the

Governor ; to which he replied to the effect that, owing to the great number of candidates already on the list, it was quite out of his power to hold out any confident expectation of being able to render my services available to Government ;—a very polite let-down to my hopes, which were indeed of the slightest, as letters of introduction are notoriously of little use in the colonies, and generally lead to loss of time and disappointment. From the Governor downwards, people go out there to get rather than to give. “*Sauve qui peut*” is the cry.

Business had at this period become unusually slack all over the colony, and employment scarce ; and, for want of something better to do, I started with another man for Ballarat, on speculation of something or other turning up there. Our spirits rose as we left the town behind, and the various little adventures on the road drove us out of ourselves, putting us into good temper in spite of circumstances, and many a hearty laugh startled the opossums and wild cats, as we smoked and talked over our camp-fire at night. After about two days and a half travelling we reached the golden regions, and though I had been on

the Bendigo, I was unprepared for the busy, stirring scene which Ballarat presented. On the part of the diggings called "the Gravel-Pits," the holes and tents were so close together that there was in some places barely room to pass between them. Few of the holes were bottomed at a less depth than a hundred and fifty feet. Windlasses were everywhere used to draw the earth up : and, what with the noise of these whirling round ; the bearded, uncouth, brigand-like appearance of most of the diggers, ascending and descending into the bowels of the earth ; the hum of thousands, talking and shouting ; the enlivening strains of opposition German bands ; store-tents with their variously coloured gay flags, and, over all, the bright blue sky of Australia, the scene altogether, like the Bendigo, was suggestive of a monster fair, only for the signs of unceasing work that everywhere met the eye. Here one could realize the amount of hardship men will willingly undergo for the sake of gold,—the getting which, after all this toil, is a mere lottery. The work is not unattended with danger, the sides of the holes having to be lined all round to a considerable depth, to prevent the wet soil falling in upon



and burying the miners. Sometimes blasting with gunpowder is resorted to, and accidents have arisen from the man who fires the train not being quick enough in leaving the hole, the explosion taking place when he is perhaps about halfway up.

The holes have to be worked day and night, otherwise the water that is continually dripping from the sides, and oozing through the soil in every direction, would gain so as to render the claim unmanageable. On this account the working parties at Ballarat are always large enough for the men to relieve one another in turn. Indeed, during the riots, caused by the injudicious conduct of the Colonial Government in enforcing an exorbitant gold license, viz. thirty shillings a month, numbers of valuable holes, in sinking which large sums of money had been spent, were deserted and ruined.

There were still signs of the late disturbances, and the sand-bags with which the Government Commissioner's camp had been hurriedly fortified were not yet removed.

The fighting seemed to have caused little or no ill-will between the soldiers and the diggers,

for I saw several of the former strolling about unarmed ; though the struggle had been sharp, and several lives lost on both sides, when the stockade within which the diggers were encamped was carried. A captain of the 40th Regiment died some time afterwards from wounds received in this struggle.

The horse-police, who, it was said, had behaved with needless barbarity, could not show themselves without being insulted.

The funeral of one of the insurgents took place while I was on the diggings. I saw no clergyman in the procession. The body was placed between sheets of bark by way of coffin.

At the time of the outbreak I was in Melbourne, where great excitement prevailed, and numbers of Government officials, and storekeepers, etc., were sworn in as special constables, in case of any rising in, or attack by the diggers upon, the city.

The diggers gained their object, so far as an alteration of the gold license system was concerned, and one of the Colonial Ministers, who had made himself extremely unpopular in the matter, was forced to resign office. The false re-

port of the fall of Sebastopol reached Melbourne about this time, and printed bills, with "forty thousand Russians blown up," met one's eye at every turn. I fancy this news helped to divert the popular mind into another channel, for the most intense interest was felt in the Russian war throughout the colony.

„ We only remained a few days at Ballarat, as we had not funds sufficient for speculating in deep sinking, and could not afford to remain longer looking for employment in a place where all necessaries were so terribly dear. During our stay we lived in a sort of hut, built of branches and bark, not unlike the miamis of the blacks. The weather being warm and dry, it was quite a sufficient shelter.

On my return to Geelong I engaged to work for a settler about a hundred and fifty miles up the Bush, for £40 a year and rations; a poor prospect enough, but I wrapped my feelings on the subject in whatever little philosophy I could muster, and resolved to be content with whatever fate awaited me. I threw myself and "swag" upon a bullock-dray, and jogged along over a road so rough, that any unpleasant ideas, not

connected with the immediate discomfort of the road, were speedily shaken out of me.

Bullocks do not usually travel more than twenty miles a day over Bush tracks, so that we were a week on our journey, for the greater part over plains scorched brown by the sun, or blackened by fires, with scarcely a hill or tree for the eye to rest upon; we however came every now and then upon the skeleton or carcase of some defunct bullock, that had probably died in harness, an object everywhere as familiar in Australian scenery as we read that the skeletons of camels are on desert routes in Arabia and Africa. By the bye, I should think camels would be found of great use in Australia, especially in exploring expeditions into the interior, where the supply of water is so extremely precarious.

One day we saw an extensive Bush fire sweeping along at the speed of a race-horse, while the wind fell hot upon one's face, as if it blew from some not very distant Pandæmonium; of which place, indeed, the whole scene was suggestive, and not less so from the fact that there was frequently not a drop of water anywhere, beyond what we carried on the dray in case we should

not meet with any at our next halting-place, and that was not very refreshing, as it partook of the heat that pervaded everything. Wood for cooking purposes we also had to carry with us on the plains, and on lighting a fire had to take every precaution against setting the dried-up grass alight, a stray spark being quite sufficient to set the whole plain on fire, like so much gun-cotton. There is a heavy penalty against travellers leaving a fire smouldering in the Bush in the hot weather; for as it is, the mischief done by neglect in this matter and from sparks falling from tobacco-pipes is very great, and may any day bring about another "Black Thursday;" so that we were always extremely careful to tread out every ember before decamping.

This monotonous travelling continued for three or four days, when, one morning, a singularly shaped hill loomed in the distance, gradually rising from the plain, like an island at sea. The name of the hill is Mount Elephant, and as we approached, it really seemed to assume very much the form of the head and upper portions of that animal, and one could easily imagine a continuation of legs below the horizon. After the dead

level of the plains, the hill was quite like a companion—a far more congenial one than the bullock driver—as I watched it till we stopped close to where it rose abruptly from the plain. The top seemed to have been at some period cleft asunder, as if by volcanic action, and in the hollow I was told there was a pool of fresh water.

The whole plain at the foot of the mountain is scattered over with small and large fragments of rock, honeycombed, and apparently burnt, as if cast out at an eruption. These stones being very hard and angular, were extremely unpleasant to travel over, either riding or on foot. Near the base of the hill there is a small stream of water, but too brackish to drink. I noticed a few wretched-looking stunted trees on the plain near the hill, and straggling up its sides, like outcasts from the society of some distant forest. After camping, and an hour's or so attempt at sleep under the dray,—for it was noon, and the heat reflected from the stony plain overpowering,—we started again; the lonely mountain, as we receded from it, continuing to attract my gaze, till, island-like, it sank from sight.

After leaving Mount Elephant three men over-

took us, and begged for a drink of water ; and those who never knew the want of what is usually so easily attainable a necessary, would scarcely be able to realize how gratefully the drop we were able to spare was received.

At last a line of forest was descried on the horizon, like an army drawn up for action ; and soon after entering its shade—so welcome after the heat and glare of the plain—we rejoiced to find a creek of clear, *cold* water. Further on we came upon a small lake of brackish water, its margin incrustated with salt, and at last we arrived, towards evening, at our journey's end, and sought our future abode—the men's hut—where supper was just being got ready ; and I was glad to see the cook take a really respectable loaf of bread out of the camp oven, instead of the customary damper. Dampers, indeed, are gradually becoming obsolete throughout the Bush ; and I trust there may be improvements in other respects, and that the settlers, besides improving their own condition,—as many are now doing by building dwellings more permanent than log-huts, and furnishing them comfortably and even elegantly,—will attend also in a greater degree to the

well-being of those in their employment ; and will give them such facilities as are in their power for indulging in any healthy amusements which may counteract the tendency, very general among bushmen and shepherds, to revenge themselves for the dull uniformity of their lives, by spending their six months' or year's savings in a " spree " at Melbourne, or some other town, or in getting drunk at a Bush public-house.

I was told of one old fellow who used, year after year, as regularly as pay-day came round—the past twelve months having been spent in perfect sobriety—to take his year's wages, £40 or £50, to a neighbouring public-house, and there sit drinking by himself, with his notes or gold in one pocket, and the change in the other, paying for each glass as he had it, till the money was all gone.

He was a sly old wretch, for he never allowed himself to become so drunk as to be robbed ; and his system of payment on receipt prevented his being charged for liquor he had not had.

When the last shilling was gone, he would present himself at the station again, to commence another year of sobriety, only to be terminated in



the above-described manner. The old man was a steady worker. Surely it is the duty of all squatters to see that those under them are not driven to such straits for relaxation! Where there are few or no books, and no healthy amusements, what are ignorant men to do in their leisure hours?

Many of the masters are as ignorant and as inclined to drink as their men; still, the more enlightened among the squatters might surely do more than they have done in the matter.

We were at once employed day and night in burning the grass from a track about the width of an English high-road, marked off by furrows ploughed on either side. This track enclosed a space about twenty miles in circuit. The space thus burnt formed a sort of barrier against the Bush fires round the home-station, but not always an effectual one, as the fire sometimes leaps over these tracks. Our method of proceeding was this:—Two men set the grass within the furrows on fire, by dragging after them a strip of lighted canvas smeared over with pitch, while three or four fellows followed beating the fire out with green branches, whenever it seemed likely to cross

the furrows, which it did pretty often, when we had no little trouble in beating it out.

The Bush fires were this season unusually destructive in the Port Fairy district, and one or two came unpleasantly near the station. At night their appearance was extremely picturesque, as they swept over the plain in front of the rising ground on which the home-station stood. My employer was in a constant state of nervous apprehension for his sheep, which do not possess the instinct or courage to run from the fire, but meekly wait to be roasted.

The grandest sight of the kind I ever saw was one night when the fire reached the forest, dashing up the stringy-bark trees and into their highest tops with wonderful celerity, making the huge, ungainly branches and every twig stand out in bold relief, apparently swelling to twice their usual proportions, or collapsing as the flames blazed up or momentarily died away. What with the glare, the screaming of frightened wild cats and other animals, and birds flying in alarm from their nests, the cracking and crashing of branches, like bones being scrunched by Brobdignagian wild beasts, it was a grand scene of destruction.

Occasionally some huge hollow tree would succumb to the fire, sending up a fountain of sparks, as it fell thundering and crashing through the branches of other trees to the ground. But no description of mine can do anything like justice to the terrific, though picturesque, grandeur of these fiery scenes.

I only stopped on this station a week, as I did not like my employer, and having heard that reapers were getting first-rate wages about Warrnambool and Belfast, I started thither. On the night of the day I left, I put up at an inn, where were congregated a number of Bush men, who were drinking and fighting when I arrived, and had been, I was told, all day. When daylight failed, and they could not see to bruise each other out of doors, they retired to the house, and fought by candle-light; the landlord, a great bull-necked fellow, looking on with complacency, dispensing spirits at a shilling per nobbler, *i. e.* a wine-glassful. His coat was off, and his shirt-sleeves tucked up, as if quite ready to join the fray.

To do him justice, however, he was discriminating enough to see that I was not of the

quarrelsome sort, and considerably at bed-time showed me into a quiet room, which I had all to myself. He was not by any means bound to do this, as the other guests, who were packed three or four together into one room, paid the same for their accommodation as I did, besides filling their host's pocket by drinking.

I was rather surprised to find, in such a place, on the table in the bed-room, a well-bound copy of Lord Byron's Poems. Of course, his poems are not in themselves such as one would ordinarily look to for comfort and consolation; but the very first sight of the book called up associations of the past, so different from Bush public-house scenes, that I welcomed it affectionately as an old friend.

I was accompanied in the morning for a few miles by a man who had left the station at the same time as myself; he forced his society upon me, and I found it difficult to get rid of him or give him the slip, till as a last resource I made myself so intensely disagreeable and uncompanionable, that he left me.

I travelled for some time over a burnt-up plain, now and then falling in with a solitary shepherd

and flock. To these shepherds far up the Bush, meeting a traveller is quite an event in the course of their long, monotonous days; and every now and then as I journeyed over the plains I descried one making for me, as eager to have a chat as a ship's company is to speak another vessel on a long voyage. This is often a shepherd's only chance of hearing something of the world without, from which he is usually so completely isolated; and I was often glad of the excuse to drop my "swag" from my shoulders, have a smoke and talk, and possibly a drink of cold tea from his flask. Imagine us reclining under one of the few stunted trees on the glaring plain, fifteen hundred sheep or so around, and the shepherd's faithful old friend, the sheep-dog, panting by our side,—quite a pastoral scene. As I proceeded, the face of the country underwent a change; the trees seemed to come up closer together, looking less like stunted bushes, and presently from a slight eminence I beheld what appeared to me, after the thirsty plain, a land of Beulah. My burden dropped from my shoulders almost of its own accord, and I rested.

At my feet lay the forest, interspersed with

large cleared spaces filled with yellow corn; beyond was the sea. It was indeed a treat to breathe the cold, damp, seaweed-scented breeze. One must visit hot countries like Australia fully to appreciate the contrast between drougthy plains and deserts, and tracts covered with forests, rich crops and rivers. Merely from my Australian experiences I think I fully appreciated Stanley's descriptions of Sinai and Palestine, with their contrasts of oases, and desert. At one dairy-farm where I stopped for a drink of water, I was asked to stay the night. I feasted on splendid beef, butter, and cheese; no slight treat, after the perpetual mutton I had lately been obliged to content myself with. I found the people in this part of the country very hospitable, and one evening as I was walking along, thinking it was nearly time to turn in for the night under some hospitable gum-tree, a settler on horseback met me, and asked if I was looking out for work. He did not want any one himself, as his crops were not quite ready for cutting, but he directed me where to find employment, and moreover invited me to spend the night at his house. He treated me most hospitably, though as the house was small, as most Bush houses are,

I had to sleep in a barn on a heap of clean straw, which formed a most luxurious couch. This settler, though his house was little better than a log-hut, was a very well-to-do man.

In the morning, my host showed me the way to the farm where he had told me I should find work. My course was chiefly through corn-fields, and the day was hot, but every now and then the heat was delightfully tempered by the sea breeze; quite a luxurious temperature to any one stretched at ease in the shade, but still too hot to be pleasant when toiling along under a "swag." The sea-breeze about noon, or earlier in the hot season, I have felt as far inland as Bendigo, about eighty miles from the coast. In stepping over a fallen tree I narrowly missed treading on the tail of a snake of the diamond species, beautifully marked, the bite of which is said to be deadly. It was at least as much startled as myself, and entered its hole before I had time to intercept it. For some time after I instinctively avoided dead trees and long grass.

By-and-by, being rather done up with walking and heat, I rested under the shadiest tree I could find. The day was beautiful, and the scenery

also, after its kind. The parrots and cockatoos seemed to be chattering and screaming with joy even more than usual, the white plumage of the cockatoos looking like snow-flakes against the hot sky, as they flew about in large flocks. The noise of these birds, unpleasant as it is in a room, is, to my taste, extremely musical in the open air. The air was loaded with the aromatic scent of wild flowers, and all Nature appeared to be enjoying herself in a dreamy, tropical kind of way; at all events, I soon got drowsy and fell asleep. As I was leaving the spot my eye was attracted by some bushes, different in appearance to what one usually meets with in Australia. On a nearer approach I found that they were very old friends, though relapsed into a wild state; raspberry bushes, in fact. The seeds had probably been dropped accidentally, as raspberries are not indigenous to Australia. The ground was covered with these bushes well laden with fruit for some yards, so that I had quite a feast.

As I had gone rather out of the way, I did not reach the farm till near sunset. The farmer was out at work, and his wife directed me to him. He was very civil, and accepted my services as a reaper, and then led the way home to supper.



Stopping as we went to put up a sheaf of corn that had fallen, we discovered under it two snakes, an old and young one. This part of Victoria is very much infested by snakes, harmless, and deadly; though, strangely enough, not more than half-a-dozen fatal cases from snake-bites came to my knowledge during my whole residence in Australia,—about six years,—and this is the more remarkable, as children usually go about bare-footed in the Bush. I have not seen any Australian snakes more than seven feet long, though I heard of one nearly thirty feet in length.

I should have told the reader that I had had no experience whatever in reaping, so that I had some very slight misgivings as to how I should get on; though, when watching others, I could see no great difficulties to be overcome in the operation; however, I trusted to the inspiration of the moment,—a course which had got me through not a few difficulties before.

After supper, my employer brought out some sickles and reaping-hooks, and asked me which I preferred working with. This question rather amused me, as I had never at any time had either instrument in my hand; however, I chose a reap-

ing-hook, but carefully abstained from talking about reaping, lest my ignorance should betray itself.

That night I slept in a barn again, but not very well, as I lay awake a long time anticipating my novel occupation on the morrow. At last I did get some disturbed sleep. In my dreams I fancied I was reaping; sometimes getting on like an experienced husbandman, at others making a great mess of it.

It was a consolation to me that I had a companion who knew as little about the work as myself. As soon as morning dawned, we rose and sallied forth, weapon in hand. Our employer met us as we were leaving the barn, and led the way to the scene of action. As we went, he talked about farming matters, so that I was forced to reply; and since I was regularly in for it, and was more likely to betray myself by keeping silence than by talking, I rattled away as if I had been an agriculturist all my life, and my very small stock of second-hand knowledge on the subject would soon have been exhausted if the walk had been longer. Our employer's work lay in another part of the field to ours, and when

we reached it we delayed beginning, waiting for him to go, as we did not care to commence under his eye. After stopping with us a minute or so, he began to get a little impatient, and left us, saying, we had better begin if we meant to get anything done before breakfast; and we had scarcely begun, before we saw him well into his work at the other side of the field. Simple as reaping appears, it is not so easy to do it neatly and payingly, without experience, as we soon discovered.

We had cut but little, and that in a slovenly manner, when our employer shouted out that it was breakfast time, and came up to us.

I shall not easily forget the expression of his face as he looked at our work, and found fault, as well he might, in no very gentle terms. We, of course, expressed our astonishment at his unreasonable conduct; and, as it was evident he would not employ us further, we told him we could not think of working for him any longer, and so, defending ourselves as wronged individuals under the shield of injured innocence, we retreated to another farm, where we again offered ourselves as reapers. We found the owner at work, and told

him our object. He, in reply, handed me a sickle, saying quietly, "That's a nice bit of corn, let's see you cut a little." I made a few strokes, as few as possible, and handed back the sickle; but those few strokes seemed to be enough for him, and he quietly declined employing us. We would not, however, be daunted by these disappointments. By watching others at work we very soon gained a sufficient knowledge, and were in the way of becoming very fair reapers, when I was offered work with a threshing machine.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## THRESHING,

I AGREED to accompany a threshing machine on its journeys round the neighbourhood. The pay was ten shillings a day with board, which was usually extremely good, and such lodging as the various barns afforded. About sixteen men altogether were attached to the machine, which was worked by bullocks. I found the work very hard, and was always quite tired at night, when we all retreated to our common bedrooms—the aforementioned barns—though indeed, at one or two of the more recently settled farms, which did not even boast a barn, we were content to sleep out in the open air; no great hardship at that season of the year. The food, though good, was roughly served up, of course, for such a rough company.

Several glasses of strong rum were served out daily to every man who chose to take it, and few

refused. The work was so incessant, and the heat and dust so great, that some stimulant was necessary to keep us going. One of the farmers was in a very great hurry to get his corn threshed ; and every morning, at the first streak of day, he would go round to all the sleepers in turn, bottle and glass in hand, to coax them out of their blankets. His policy always succeeded, for when he had thus spirited two or three of the noisiest fellows from their slumbers, it was impossible for the others to sleep.

At one of the farms I was greatly amused with the farmer's wife, who seemed quite to have usurped her husband's place ; a thorough tyrant she was, coming down with her harsh voice upon any poor fellow who for a moment relaxed his labours ; sometimes she actually took the pitchfork out of a man's hand to show him how to work. Somehow, we all allowed ourselves to be hen-pecked ; for we stood from this woman what no one of any spirit would from another man. I really think we were afraid of her, for she was a very big woman, and could work like two ordinary men herself. Two or three men, who had satisfied everybody else, were discharged for not

coming up to her ideas. Her vocabulary of slang was extensive, to judge by the choice morsels of it she bestowed upon us as she went her rounds, occasionally followed by her husband, a small, meek man, who usually carried the baby. He hardly ever opened his lips without being silenced instantly by the loud voice of his better-half, of whom he was in continual dread. She could do all kinds of farming work, had broken in horses, and was reported to have slaughtered cattle herself. Surely the blood of the Amazons ran in her veins, she seemed to hold men so cheap. She was a warning to all strong-minded women of what they may develope into, under favourable circumstances, in the Bush, where I have met with more than two or three of the same sort.

Of course, practical jokes were frequent amongst such a *mixed* set of men; for there were two or three really gentlemanly and educated men amongst us.

These jokes were generally more annoying than amusing or clever, such as shying stones or raw potatoes at one's plate when dining in the open air,—a well-directed shot frequently scattering one's dinner to the winds. At night also

some of the most reckless fellows used to amuse themselves by throwing all kinds of missiles among the sleepers, such as sacks filled with chaff, brooms, and on one occasion a pitchfork. These things are of course only worth mentioning, as showing what a man may have to endure in the colonies.

A river, the name of which I forget, flowed near most of the farms we visited, and greatly did I enjoy the luxury of a swim after the heat and toil of the day.

When I had accumulated a small fund by threshing, I walked to Port Fairy, where a considerable township was springing up, hoping to find something to do that did not involve quite so much physical exertion as my recent occupation.

The races were going on when I arrived, and all the "*élite*" and otherwise of the district were congregated on the racecourse, which is picturesquely situated, having the sea and some rocks, with the spray dashing over them, for a background to the picture. The jockeys were appropriately dressed and well mounted, and the races were generally well contested. There was



a goodly display of booths and refreshment-tents ; indeed, the whole thing was kept up with great spirit, recalling to one's mind like scenes at home, the only perceptible difference being the dry air, unclouded sky, and strong muster of horse-women.

I did not succeed in the object for which I came to the town, and at the end of a couple of weeks there was nothing for it but to return to threshing. I soon found a machine, whose fortunes I followed for a short time. The last farm I was at was an Irishman's, who wished me to remain after the machine had gone, to help to winnow the wheat. My chief reminiscences of this farm are that it was untidily kept, though the owner was well off,—the pigs, in true Irish fashion, having the run of the house, a one-storied, weather-boarded shanty, that,

“Battered and decayed,  
Let in new light, through chinks that time had made.”

The aborigines had several times shown themselves on the farms during our harvesting operations, and even deigned occasionally to offer their services, which were not very valuable, and could not be depended on, as they only worked by fits

and starts, just as it suited them ; indeed, though they are generally as active as eels, their frames are quite unfit for any long-continued hard labour.

The blacks are said to have a strong prejudice against the Chinese, whom they accuse of being neither black nor white. They are equally disliked by European labourers and workmen in the colony, chiefly because they work for much lower wages than Europeans. I saw no Chinese on any of the farms where I worked ; indeed, I doubt very much whether the European colonists would, as a rule, work or associate with them in any way ; and they seem to know this, for they invariably keep by themselves as much as possible, on the diggings and elsewhere.

I heard that on a station where some had been engaged for the sheep-washing,—and there were about twenty Chinese to four or five Europeans,—the former, relying on their numbers, became insolent, when the latter rose upon them and literally drove them from the station, to which they did not return. This is the only case I ever heard of in which the Chinese were the aggressors. They congregate chiefly on the va-

rious diggings, where they have a quarter, as in Melbourne, to themselves, the chief men among them having a certain authority delegated to them by the rest. They are very sober, quiet, and inoffensive, paying their way, as some of the so-called superior race do not ; but this does not save them always from being roughly used by the Europeans.

On one occasion the diggers rose *en masse* upon the Chinese, on the plea that they muddied the water of the creek, rendering it unserviceable for gold-washing, etc. They fled without making any resistance, though, from their numbers, they might have made some defence. On coming to a creek such was their panic and confusion, that many of them threw away their swags in such numbers that their enemies are reported to have followed them dry-shod. A few of the worst characters among the diggers made some of them deliver up the gold about their persons.

The Chinese are not hard workers ; at least, not what Englishmen would consider so. I have seen half-a-dozen of them on the diggings doing what I should consider one ordinary man's work ; and they chatter too much at their labour to give one

the idea of real industry ; however, their wants are few, as they live chiefly on rice.

The Victorian Government has of late years regarded the influx of Chinamen as a nuisance, and they are now subjected to a heavy poll-tax by way of discouragement.

An observant Chinese must think it rather inconsistent that while England has been engaged in forcing open China to the commerce of the world, she suffers at least in one part of the world that exclusive system to be adopted towards Chinamen, which she condemns when practised towards herself. Of course, in judging such a case, they would not be likely to see that the fault is chiefly with the Colonial, and not the Home Government ; that the former is practically independent of the latter, in most matters, though a part of the same Empire. England will always be considered, by foreigners, more or less responsible for the sins of her own offspring, as long as they are tied to her apron-strings, however slight those same ties may be. It certainly appears most unjust to me that Chinamen should not be allowed free entry to the colony.

They are commonly said to be addicted to im-

morality of the grossest nature ; they may be, but I can only say that, though there are not less than thirty thousand of them in the colony, I have never seen one drunk, and their names very seldom figure in the police reports. The diggers and others had, in my humble opinion, better begin to mend their own habits, before they cry out about their children being in danger of contamination by the Chinese.

So long as the principles of free trade and communication are generally acted upon throughout the British Empire, as I trust they always will be, the question which I have heard started, as to how far the presence of a race so different in habits and religion will eventually be beneficial or otherwise to the colony, is by the mark altogether.

On quitting the farm, my thoughts once more turned diggings-wards; and as the Mount William diggings were nearest, I started for them, carrying my swag as usual.

It was afternoon when I set out, and I expected to reach a Bush inn on the river Hopkins before night ; but Bush miles are long, and evening closed in ere I reached the desired goal. As

the moon would not be up till near morning, I knew I should not be able to keep the track after sunset, so having fixed upon the least uninviting-looking spot for a bed-chamber, I rolled myself up in my blankets, after solacing myself with the customary pannikin of tea. During the early part of the night I was kept awake by a thunder-storm, luckily unaccompanied by rain; but afterwards I slept tolerably well, though I was once startled out of my sleep by some animal or snake brushing by close to my head. An hour or so before daylight the moon rose, with an accompaniment of screeches of wild cats, and other uncanny noises, which quite drove away all thoughts of further slumber; so I shouldered my swag and walked on through the forest, stopping every now and then to gather from a pretty-looking tree of low growth that anomalous fruit—cherries with the stones outside,—in which my unlearned eye could detect not the slightest resemblance to cherries, properly so called. The fruit is more the size and shape of a currant, only a little larger. Between the fruit and stalk is a round green knob, which is the stone.

I reached the inn by breakfast time, where I

found a squatter from a neighbouring station, and one or two stockriders, taking their morning nobbler. The squatter was in want of a stock-rider, and pressed me to undertake the duty, which I finally agreed to. He was not able to go with me to his station, as he was on the point of going to Warrnambool for his wife, having only come to the station a few days before I met him.

The station was not two miles from the inn, and I had been walking about half an hour when I began to wonder why I had not reached it. I walked on, but still no station; it was plain I had somehow got out of the right path. I sat down on a fallen tree to consider a bit, assisting my deliberations by smoking a pipe of tobacco. Presently, I was rejoiced to hear sounds as of horses approaching at a gallop. I "cooeed" (a cry borrowed from the blacks) as loud as I could, but received no answer, and I concluded that the horses were riderless; but that idea was soon dispelled by the galloping ceasing abruptly, far more so than when a number of horses pull up of their own accord: but then, if there were riders, why did they not answer my repeated

calls? The gallopings continued, beginning and stopping again, till I began to think about the tales I had read in my boyhood of haunted forests, for the sounds were getting near, and still I could see no signs of horses through the trees. At length they got fainter, and presently ceased altogether. Having finished my pipe, and made up my mind in what direction to go, I was just in the act of rising, when I heard something moving behind me, and turning round I was startled at seeing half-a-dozen kangaroos drawn up in regular file a few yards off. They regarded me steadfastly for a few moments, till I broke the embarrassing silence, and they retreated respectfully a little further off, when they again turned right-about-face, and looked at me as before. They thus kept increasing the distance between us, at each halt turning round to look at me, till I put an end to their visit by rising and yelling at them, when they hopped away as only kangaroos can, covering, I should think, twenty-five feet of ground at each jump. They retreated in a line, the tallest kangaroo leading. The mystery was solved, for several kangaroos hopping together make a noise just like the galloping of horses.



I resumed my walk, but could not descry the station, nor hear any signs of its proximity, such as dogs barking, or cattle lowing. I began to feel slightly perplexed, not to say tired and thirsty; but I pushed on, keeping as straight a course as possible, till I got amongst a cluster of small hills or mounds, of a most bewildering uniformity of height and general likeness to each other. As I wearily climbed them, I looked from the summit of each successive mound to get a view of the country around; but, go in what direction I would, I only climbed one hill to find another on the opposite side, and all were so densely wooded with young trees as to prevent my seeing more than a hundred yards or so ahead. At length I became utterly perplexed, and evening coming on, I resigned myself to my fate for the night. There was a small quantity of sugar in my swag, a portion of which I ate, by way of supper, and, feverish with thirst, I threw myself on my blankets; but Nature's soft nurse would not be coaxed by me any more than by Shakspeare's Henry IV., though I was as free from "all appliances, and means to boot," as the immortalized ship-boy, the envy of Royalty.

I was tantalized throughout the night by imaginations of all the cooling beverages I had ever drunk, and began to regard the North Pole, with its icebergs and perpetual snows, as the most desirable region upon earth. The wild cats seemed to squeal more dismally than ever, and my nerves were in such a state of tension that every sound was painfully distinct.

I got up in the morning heated and unrefreshed, only again to climb those seemingly endless mounds, or to dive into the hollows between them, till at length I again heard a sound of galloping, but it was no kangaroo this time; the biggest boomer in the Bush could not imitate the crack of a stock-whip. I cooed as loud as I could; the rider answered, and I was soon refreshing myself from his flask. He put me in the right way, and in about an hour I came upon the stock-yard of a station, which I supposed to be the one I was in search of, as its appearance answered to the squatter's description. I was rather in doubt though, as nobody was at home. I waited outside for some little time, and then opened the door, determined to forage for provisions, for I was getting too hungry to have any

very nice distinctions between *meum* and *tuum* in such matters. The door was only fastened with a latch, and inside everything was in confusion as if belonging to people who had lately come there. This nearly convinced me that I had come to the right place, and I ate their beef and made damper without much scruple. After a hearty meal I slept for a few hours; when I awoke it was getting towards evening. I began to feel uncommonly tired of my own company, and was rejoiced to find a newspaper, about six months old, which I read even to every advertisement. I momentarily expected the arrival of some one belonging to the place, and even now a lingering doubt would cross my mind, and make me think about the figure I should cut if I really had come to the wrong place, and made free with the people's things. No one, however, came till the middle of the next day, when I was relieved by seeing my employer approaching with his wife, and a couple of well-loaded drays. I was at once employed in helping to brand the wild cattle, rather a hazardous work anybody would think, but no accident happened to me, though one day I had a narrow escape of being jammed against the

high fence of the stock-yard by an enraged cow that had a strong objection to being penned up for branding, but a poke in the ribs from a pole drew her attention away from me, and I escaped from my difficulties. At night the cattle that were to be milked in the morning were shut up in the stock-yard, close to the hut, and a fine bellowing they made the night through, but I soon got used to it.

My literary resources at this period depended entirely upon the postman, who, at intervals of about three months, used to bring me the letters and newspapers that had been accumulating at the Melbourne Post-Office. The Russian war was going on then, and the papers of course were anxiously looked for.

In leisure moments I used to fish a good deal for eels and black-fish, sometimes by moonlight, when numbers of platypi, *i. e.* duck-billed moles with webbed feet, might be seen disporting themselves on the water. These creatures lay eggs.

Sometimes the arrival of a few blacks, the last remnants of a neighbouring tribe, would help to vary the scene. They came chiefly for the purpose of fishing in the river Hopkins. Their

method of fishing seemed to me ingenious for such utter savages. They dammed up the river where it was shallow, making openings in the dam, where they placed long narrow baskets, from eight to twelve feet long, but of so small a diameter that when the eels were once in they could not turn to get out.

The natives cook opossums by throwing them on the fire in their skins, without preparation of any sort.

I had on one occasion the honour of seeing Royalty at dinner, in the person of His Most Gracious Majesty, Tom, King of Tarrangower, for such were the titles engraved on a large brass plate suspended by a chain of the same metal from his neck. He was seated on the ground before his miami, or hut, intently watching the roasting of an opossum, the appearance of which as it lay burnt and blackened on the embers was anything but tempting. When it was cooked to his Majesty's liking, he exercised the Royal prerogative of tearing off the best portions, tossing the remainder to his two consorts, who sat most submissively behind, no doubt aware that they might be tomahawked at any moment, as I was told one

of their predecessors had been. His Majesty's manner of preparing an eel for dinner seemed to me objectionable, though really when one comes to think of it, not more so than the more civilized practice of skinning and boiling eels and lobsters alive. He threw the creature on the embers to cook itself, replacing it whenever it wriggled off. It was rather horrid to see, and one missed the bubbling cauldron that so decently veils the boiling process within.

While I was at this place a marriage was celebrated, which is worth mentioning, as characteristic of the colony, the youthful couple having no better home than a calico tent, wherein to commence housekeeping. They seemed very happy, though, and the fact that an imprudent pair can exist comfortably under a few yards of calico speaks volumes for the geniality of the Australian climate.

On leaving the Port Fairy district I returned to Melbourne by steamer from Belfast. After we had entered Hobson's Bay, a large ship passed us, bound for Liverpool. I felt an indescribable longing to transfer myself to her decks, but I resisted the impulse, and contented myself for the

time with the mere anticipation of one day actually realizing the sensation of being on board a home-bound ship. I had however been long enough in the colony to render a return home something very similar to a dream, so pleasant that it seemed hardly likely ever to become fact. I had, in short, got used to a state of exile without in any degree having lost my home affections. It was while in this state of mind that I wrote the following verses, which I will preface by telling the kind-hearted reader that the presentiment in the last stanza, of not reaching home, was not realized, as is usually the case with human anticipations of an interestingly melancholy nature. I suppose it was rather commonplace not to be wrecked after such a foreboding.

.

#### HOMEWARD-BOUND.

Swiftly our vessel darts  
Over the waving sea,  
Whose laughter warms the hearts  
Of those who homeward flee.

Each billow left astern  
Brings home and friends more nigh,  
Yet lovingly we yearn  
For wings to faster hie.

At length our native land  
Uprises from the deep,  
Brightly on either hand  
Blue hills and valleys sleep.

Now, like a long-hushed tune  
Recalling memories sweet,  
Glad voices low commune,  
And loving glances meet.

'Tis like some sunny dream,  
Too happy to be true,  
That sheds a passing gleam  
• Then vanishes from view.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

## CONCLUSION.

AND here I must draw my narrative to a close, for, as soon after this period my "roughing it" in a great measure ceased, I should be wandering from my subject if I prolonged this account.

The question may be asked, "And pray what has been the gain of this hard, rough life in Australia?" My answer is, that to those, who look at life superficially, the time may seem to have been wellnigh lost, but I feel in myself that it was very far indeed from being so.

Time surely cannot be lost in which a man learns—and the lesson is a long one—how far he may be self-dependent among whatever circumstances he may chance to be thrown. I have learned practically that a man, if he be at all true to himself, is more or less equal to pretty nearly all positions, however novel. A man is never

beaten, however often he may fail, unless he himself gives up. A man who is knocked down over and over again is not overcome, as long as he has the will, though he have lost the power to renew the combat. His will, his determination, all that makes him a man, is still enthroned in the centre of his being. Failure, even though it be through his own idleness or weakness, does not make a man less than he *is*, it only shows him plainly *what* he is; it only shows him that so far as strength to maintain his position is concerned, he was at the bottom of the ladder already, at the very time when he, and perhaps his friends, thought him nearer the top. There is a great power too in the humility brought about by defeat and failure, whether the causes are extraneous or in oneself, and it is from these ashes of humiliation that the most glorious victories of all kinds most commonly spring—especially that greatest of all victories, the conquest of a man's self. No man has failed finally in anything who does not choose to think that he has failed. So long as hope and faith are centred in his being, though all around him say that he has failed, *he has not*; the living seeds of success, the prin-

ciples of life are within him: they may show no signs of coming to maturity, it is true, but no one can deny that they are there. I honestly confess to the reader that I have often failed, failed grievously through my own fault,—and who has not, more or less?—but I may also say sincerely, that I have never given up finally, and therefore have never been utterly beaten.

• And I feel that my Australian life has not been entirely lost time, so far *as others* are concerned, for I am conscious that I was less fitted than many in my station would have been for the life I led there, and they may well draw encouragement from my experiences as to their own futures, however uncertain they may be. Could I, while in England, have foreseen all that I had to undertake and go through with in Australia, I should fairly have been aghast, and yet, when my life there actually began, everything that happened to me I was enabled to look upon as matter of course. Even the square peg soon came to fit the round hole. There was something enjoyable in the very uncertainty of my prospects—there was continual novelty, nothing like *ennui*; in fact, I look back upon the “roughing it” part

of my life with more satisfaction than any other portion, though of course I feel that I have had enough of it ; it is a phase of my existence past and done with, though I believe I could, with God's help, anticipate another edition of it with great equanimity.

I think I may at least be allowed to congratulate myself on having, after a sort, graduated in the colonial college of endurance.

I may be wrong, but I feel quite convinced that even in the track of my past life—and in whose life are there not ?—there may be desried

“Footprints that perhaps another,  
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,  
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
Seeing, may take heart again.

“Let us, then, be up and doing,  
With a heart for any fate ;  
Still achieving, still pursuing,  
Learn to labour and to wait.”

I feel that my sympathies have been enlarged. I have *experienced* what a labourer's life is ; I have *felt* that there is real dignity in labour of all kinds ; that physical labour is very far from being incompatible with refinement of taste and feeling. I cannot now look upon another as an

inferior *in himself, because* his conventional grade in society is lower, *because* his hands are rough and toil-stained. *Real* inferiority is often, of course, a concomitant of a humble position in society; but a humble station is not *the soil* from which the inward inferiority of which I am speaking springs; the soul must originally have been allowed to come down to the same level with the outward social position. In point of wealth, outward rank and education, which wealth in a manner brings, there must always, in a society such as ours, be social differences; but with a very small degree of education,—such as our labouring classes can generally afford, if they choose,—there may always be that refinement of heart and soul that makes all men brothers, which all, whatever their rank, are constrained to respect, whether they will or no.

The heart is the common level where all meet as brethren; and that is the level whereon, whenever I meet my fellow-men, I have learned, I trust, to meet them on equal terms.

In conclusion, I need hardly say that, so far from having anything like a feeling of degradation, when I speak of my labouring life in Aus-

tralia, I feel conscious of having been raised by it to a higher level ; for in it I have learned, I do believe, in a considerable measure to separate tinsel from reality ; to understand, without any republicanism, the true grounds upon which all men are equal. Of course, in saying this, I do not pretend to have made any discovery ; but it is one thing to know a thing practically, and another to believe it theoretically ; the latter, if it go no further, is a mere cold abstraction, the former is a warm, living reality.

THE END.



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